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# THE BAGESU

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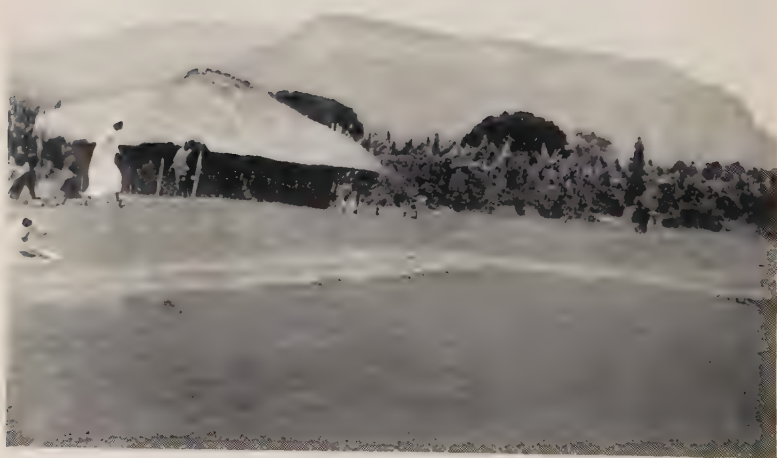
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Commissioner's camping ground



Commissioner's camp

Scenery on Mount Elgon

# THE BAGESU

AND OTHER TRIBES OF THE  
UGANDA PROTECTORATE

THE THIRD PART OF THE REPORT  
OF THE MACKIE ETHNOLOGICAL  
EXPEDITION TO CENTRAL  
AFRICA

BY

JOHN ROSCOE, M.A.

Hon. Canon of Norwich and Rector of Ovington, Norfolk  
Formerly of the Church Missionary Society

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## PREFACE

IN sending forth this, the third and last volume of the report of the Mackie Ethnological Expedition, my feelings are mainly those of dissatisfaction at the incompleteness of the work, but there is some consolation in the thought that there may be here something new both for the scientist and for the ordinary reader, and that some light may be shed on matters which hitherto lay in the twilight of uncertainty and doubt.

It is for those who undertook the responsibility of arranging and directing this expedition to judge in how far it has fulfilled their expectations. The writer, who had the great privilege of undertaking the actual investigation, can only wish that it could have been carried further and that discoveries of greater value to science had been made.

Though information concerning many hitherto little known customs has been obtained, the origin of these pastoral people of the Lake Region still remains a mystery. We may hope that in due time it will be possible to piece together items of knowledge thus gathered from different sources and to make from them a complete story. The student of these matters can no longer doubt that these pastoral people entered the Lake Region as immigrants from the north east and that they were associated with the people who in remote ages made Egypt so interesting. There remains still to be accomplished the more difficult, and, I venture to think, the more interesting, task of procuring information from the tribes along the frontier of Abyssinia. Such an investigation will supply much that is missing and might possibly give some reliable indications of the dates at which migrations took place. To those tribes we must look for the solution of what is still overshadowed by mystery, and the necessary investigation is rendered very difficult by the suspicions of these people and their desire to remain free from the intrusion of the white man.

In this third volume I have brought together scraps of information gathered mainly while travelling from place to place. With the exception of the notes on the Bagesu, Basabei, and Bakyiga, the information was collected in places where the expedition halted to spend the night and to obtain fresh porters for the baggage. Any experienced traveller will readily understand how impossible it is to be sure that information obtained from the casual informant is reliable. He may be useful and his information valuable, but it is also quite possible that if you knew the man better or could hear what his companions and clan-fellows think of him, you would place no trust in him. Information thus obtained must therefore be imparted with a reservation: it is the best procurable under the circumstances.

The notes have been arranged in a geographical order. Taking Mount Elgon as the starting point, we move westward to Lake Albert, then in a south westerly direction round the Uganda Protectorate boundary to the Kigezi country bordering upon the new Belgian state, Ruanda. The tribes are dealt with separately, some, where conditions were most favourable, being more fully considered than others. The languages of these tribes differ considerably and these at times made it difficult to investigate such delicate subjects as the secrets of their social life, for enquiries often aroused suspicion as to the motives of the investigator.

There are points of divergence from, and in some instances of open contradiction of former statements given in the "Northern Bantu"; these I have thought it well to leave without any attempt at explanation, for the present notes were jotted down at odd times and in places where it was impossible to compare them with my former notes and to enquire into the causes of differences. Indeed no opportunity occurred of reading or copying these rough pencilled notes until after I had left the country. These brief accounts, however, may be of use to future workers who undertake the task of a more detailed and careful examination of such people as, for example, the Basoga.

The Lake dwellers, or Bakene, whom I sought carefully, I found to have deserted their papyrus island homes both along the rivers and in the lakes, and settled on the mainland, so that their former mode of life has ceased and a new order begun. This was due to the settled state of the country brought about by the British Government. As the lake life which I desired to investigate was gone, I made no examination of the people but turned aside to other fields.

The Expedition was carried out after the Armistice during the years 1919-20. Owing to the restricted shipping and the number of applicants for passages it was only possible to reach Africa in 1919 by travelling in a cargo steamer *viâ* the Cape of Good Hope to Mombasa. I am deeply indebted to the Directors of the Clan Line, whose kindness and courtesy made it possible for me to reach Mombasa sooner than I should otherwise have done.

To that Company I tender my grateful thanks, and to the officers of the ships in which I travelled.

The actual work of the Expedition began with the journey from Kampala to Ankole, and from there the route followed was by roads less used and more circuitous than those the natives ordinarily follow. My mode of travel was on foot or riding an ordinary bicycle while the goods were carried on the heads of native porters. The route taken was the reverse of the order in which I have arranged the ethnological information in the text.

The journey home was by the Nile from Lake Albert to Khartoum and Cairo. When travelling by the Nile steamer it was impossible to make any notes of the tribes encountered worth recording: the brief stops, to take in wood for the engines, did not give time to make more than a few enquiries from the people.

Readers who desire more detailed information as to the route of the Expedition, the scenery of the country traversed, and incidents of travel, may be referred to my book *The Soul of Central Africa* (Cassells, London, 1922), where I have touched on these topics more fully than seemed necessary in the present report.

I am indebted to Sir James G. Frazer for again reading over my proofs and making valuable suggestions; to Miss Cook, of Murtle, Aberdeenshire, a former student at Newnham College, Cambridge, who kindly undertook the work formerly done by my late friend the Rev. W. A. Cox, and read the manuscripts, giving valuable suggestions; and to Miss Bisset, my faithful and indefatigable co-worker, who has done so much for me in the preparation of this report.

To Sir Peter Mackie, the generous donor who made the expedition possible, I would not only renew my thanks for what he has done, but also express the hope that he will feel satisfied with the results. May others be stimulated by his example to assist this great cause. To the Royal Society I would again tender grateful thanks for help, advice, and sympathy.

I should like to urge most emphatically the importance of an investigation of the tribes from Lake Rudolf to the Nile along the borders of Abyssinia, and also of the Pygmies in the Semliki valley or in the Dark Forest near the river, before their habits of life are lost. It is a duty we owe to science and to posterity to secure while possible an account of the social life and customs which are rapidly vanishing. A right understanding of these people is not only of value to science, to education, and to the spread of Christianity, but facilitates the sound and peaceable government of the country.

J. ROSCOE

OVINGTON RECTORY,  
*July, 1923*



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# THE BAGESU

## CHAPTER I

### THE PEOPLE

Origin—flight to the mountain—caves of refuge—houses—villages—clans—clan exogamy—enmity between clans—harvest festivities—marriage—uncleanliness of the people—clothing—hair—ornaments—food—government—taxation—slaves—fire

MOUNT ELGON consists of a large range, or rather group, of mountain peaks, some of them rising to great heights, and it covers an area of many square miles. On the higher peaks snow lies for long periods but is not perpetual, and water is plentiful, for many streams flow from the heights. In some parts the rocky sides of the mountain rise precipitously for some hundreds of feet and streams fall over these precipices into rock basins below. In these rock walls are many caves, some of them large enough to shelter two hundred cows and several families of people. In the gorges watered by the streams there grow luxuriant forests both of fine trees and of bamboo, the latter being used for building and also cut up to form water vessels and for other purposes.

The mountain is so extensive that, although small villages are numerous, they are often separated by as much as ten to fifteen miles, and the cultivated land which surrounds each village seems but a speck on the vast slope of wild mountain.

The Bagesu tribe on Mount Elgon is one of the most primitive of the negro tribes of Africa, and was driven from the plains to the east of Mount Elgon by the attacks of the Masai and Nandi. To escape the ravages of these warlike tribes, the Bagesu fled to the mountain, only to find that on the lower slopes they were subject to periodical raids by the Abyssinians and those tribes who inhabited the borders of Abyssinia. They therefore made their way to the less easily

accessible heights and seldom left the high valleys and plateaux of the southern and western sides. Their foes, though deterred by the cold and by the ease with which missiles could be hurled on them from above as they climbed the steep paths, did at times attempt raids on the Bagesu villages; and on such occasions the inhabitants, with their flocks and herds, found places of refuge in the large natural caves with which certain parts of the mountain were honeycombed. Most of these caves were reached by steep and narrow paths, easily defended against attack, and some of them were kept provisioned and ready for occupation in case of sudden need. As long as raiders remained in the district the cattle were kept in the caves during the day and taken out to graze during the night. Though several of the caves were examined, no sign of permanent habitation was found, the floors being smooth rock without any deposits.

Bagesu houses were built in groups forming villages which varied in size from ten, the common number, to forty houses in the case of a large settlement. No attempt was ever made to build stockades to protect these villages, for the long and arduous climb which was necessary to reach them from the plain not only deterred foes from frequent attacks, but gave the people time to escape into places of safety after the raiders were sighted.

The tribe was not a large one, but numbered possibly some two thousand. It was divided into a number of clans, two or three of which had gathered round Mbale, where the Government Station is situated, while the others were scattered about the slopes of the mountain. The names of some of these clans were:

- |            |                |               |
|------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Bankoko | 7. Bafumbo     | 12. Basiguya  |
| 2. Bakonde | 8. Bahalasi    | 13. Balucheke |
| 3. Bakyiga | 9. Balago      | 14. Bavutu    |
| 4. Babuya  | 10. Balugunya  | 15. Basuguya  |
| 5. Bahugu  | 11. Baginyanya | 16. Basihu    |
| 6. Bayobo  |                |               |

The large clans were sub-divided, each small division claiming to be the head or principal division of the clan and there-



Entrance to cave



View of caves

Caves on Mount Elgon



fore masters of the part of the country in which they dwelt. The following are the names of some of the sub-divisions of the two most important clans, the Bankoko and Bakonde, though in neither case is the list exhaustive:

*Bankoko*

- |             |  |              |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| 1. Bamboi   | 10. Bambubi                                      | 17. Babezi   |
| 2. Basamaga | 11. Bakigoti                                     | 18. Bachelwe |
| 3. Bamwonyi | 12. Bamukuma                                     | 19. Banababe |
| 4. Bamdudu  | 13. Bamudoda                                     | 20. Banafuna |
| 5. Basakya  | 14. Balebe (who claim<br>a totem <i>ifumbo</i> ) | 21. Batunda  |
| 6. Bamugeni | 15. Bamasika                                     | 22. Barujeka |
| 7. Babirabi | 16. Banakamyu                                    | 23. Bamwali  |
| 8. Bakigori |  | 24. Bagaza   |
| 9. Bakumwa  |  |              |

*Bakonde*

- |             |              |             |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Balweta  | 4. Bawongolo | 6. Bamiyaga |
| 2. Bamwangu | 5. Balwaso   | 7. Bamuluya |
| 3. Bakikale |              |             |

It is probable that these clans were not totemic, for not only did they refuse to acknowledge the existence of totems, but they seemed most surprised when questioned on the subject. It is, however, quite possible that they were totemic and that some special conception of the meaning and use of totems led to this complete reticence on the subject. Clans and divisions were clearly marked and clan exogamy was enforced, while there was at the same time constant enmity between the clans, and, to a lesser degree, between the sub-divisions of the same clan. It was indeed unsafe for any man, even if armed, to wander alone into the territory of another division. Women who were found unprotected would not be attacked, but if they were unmarried they ran the risk of being captured and given in marriage to some member of their captor's clan.

At one period of the year, however, this hostility ceased and the people went about from village to village in safety. This armistice took place immediately after harvest, when beer had been brewed. At this time no man might carry any weapons; spears and knives were carefully stowed away, and

the people went about armed only with long bamboo staffs, inside which they carried beer tubes sometimes as much as four feet long, with a cane work filter in one end. As long as the beer lasted, people went from village to village drinking, dancing, and singing by day and by night. The beer was brought into open spaces in great pots, round which men and women sat in separate groups, each group having one pot in the centre into which all put their tubes. These gatherings became regular saturnalia, for men and women lived together regardless of marriage relationships. This was especially remarkable because at other times the women of the tribe were strictly chaste and the men guarded their own wives with jealous care. Though a visitor in a man's house slept near the same fire, the code of morality forbade his having any familiarity with the women of his host. If a man had several wives living in different houses, he might put a visitor into one of these houses to sleep, but he first removed the wife, who had to sleep elsewhere.

It was at this time of festivity, too, that young men and women who were ready for marriage, that is, men who had been initiated and women who had completed the keloids on forehead and body, chose their mates. The two might simply go to live together, and after they had become husband and wife, the man learned from his wife's relatives what they expected as a marriage fee, and matters were settled while the young couple continued to live together.

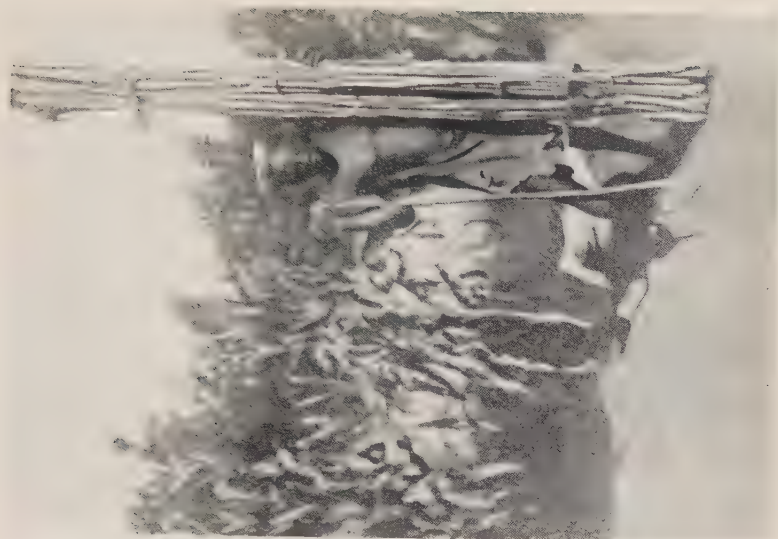
This feasting and merry-making was the one great event of the year. After it was over the clans returned to their usual hostile attitude towards each other, and even the marriage relationships which had been formed had no influence, for a man would kill his wife's brothers or his sister's husband as readily as anyone else. The women, however, were free to return to their old homes on special occasions, such as funeral ceremonies, and it was no unusual thing to find a wife attending the mourning ceremonies of her father or brother who had been killed by her husband.

These people were uncleanly both in their persons and in





Old man of the Bagesu tribe



Young man of Bagesu tribe with load of  
building material



Girl of the Bagesu tribe, showing keloids



their houses, where they made no attempt at sanitation. The floors were sometimes swept out and occasionally smeared with cow-dung to make them smooth, for they were both bed and sitting-place. Pots were rarely washed; all that they considered necessary was to scrape them out with the finger after a meal, though sometimes a stick would be used to scrape out the remains of one meal before cooking the next. The people sometimes washed their feet on a muddy day, but they never troubled to wash their bodies, though they might bathe if a stream or pool tempted them when the sun was hot. When they could procure any oil or fat they would rub it over their bodies, but otherwise they paid no heed to the filth which accumulated. Carrying water to their houses for the purpose of washing was never even thought of.

The clothing of the people was never intended either for warmth or covering. Before initiation a boy went naked, but when his initiation was complete, he was entitled to wear the dress of a full-grown man, which consisted of a skin, usually a goat-skin. Two of the legs were joined with string about a foot long. The skin was put under the right arm and the string passed over the head on to the left shoulder, so that the left side was completely exposed, though the skin covered the right side and reached halfway down the thighs. If a man refused to undergo the ceremony of initiation, he was not allowed to wear this skin, to marry, or to sit in the council of the men.

Until marriage girls also went naked or wore a sort of apron measuring some six inches by three, sometimes made of coarsely woven fibre and sometimes consisting merely of strings to which were tied the stem ends of bottle gourds. After marriage a woman wore a girdle from which, at the back, hung a fringe of banana fibre twisted into strings like cord. The ends of these strings were tied together and bound with fibre for about an inch of their length, a piece of work which only the owner of the belt might do. This end was brought between the legs from the back to the front, passed under the belt in front and allowed to hang down. When a woman became a widow, she burned this girdle and went

naked unless she married again, when she made herself another. This is still the dress worn by the married women except in the vicinity of European settlements.

Both men and women shaved all the hair off their heads, faces, and bodies at frequent intervals, often monthly.

The ornaments of unmarried girls were as a rule only bracelets, but married women wore anklets as well. The workmanship of these was crude, in fact they were of the most primitive and unfinished type to be found in this part of Africa, for there were no able artisans among the people. The bracelets and anklets were merely iron or, if possible, brass rods, about as thick as a slate pencil; these were bent round the limb and no attempt was made to join the ends or to decorate them. Though younger members of the tribe are now refusing to pierce the lips or ears, many people still wear lip ornaments, usually of wood, which is the undress ornament, while a few wear the full-dress lip ornament, a bit of white stone, some two inches long, half an inch thick at the end inserted in the lip, and tapering towards the end which protrudes. When the ornament is not in place, a button of wood is inserted to keep the hole from closing and to prevent the saliva from trickling out on to the chin. As a rule men did not wear this ornament, though there were a few exceptions, but both men and women pierced both the lobes and the helix of the ears, though they seldom enlarged the holes more than enough to insert straws. The most common ear ornaments were small iron, brass, or copper wire rings, which had a few glass beads threaded on them and were passed through these holes.

If a woman possessed any money, in the form of cowry-shells or, later, of the Uganda cents, she usually threaded it and wore it round her waist, while men carried theirs, along with other things, such as their tobacco and pipes, fetishes, and so forth, in bags slung on the left shoulder. These bags were made of goat or even wild cat skins, flayed off whole from the animal, leaving stumps of the legs. Sometimes the skin of the head was left on, but often it was cut off and the neck stitched up.

The most common food was the plantain, but the people also grew and used large quantities of millet of two or three kinds, a kind of pea known as *pokya*, and beans and maize. Sweet potatoes were grown by a few and also marrows and small tomatoes, though these were not generally used.

The people kept a few cows, but they cooked the milk into cakes and rarely drank it fresh.

Food was eaten straight from the pot, and a man with his wife and family sat round one pot, helping themselves with their hands. A visitor never ate with the family, but was given a share some distance away. A man was expected to supply food for his parents in their old age, and he generally built a house for them near his own so that he could easily attend to their needs.

There was no tribal government, but each clan had its own head who settled serious matters within the clan and also dealt with disputes arising between members of different clans. Each village had also its head-man, who settled ordinary cases of dispute, but any difficult matters had to be submitted to the head or father of the clan. Cases of murder, the kidnapping of women and all matters in which another clan was concerned had to be brought before him.

There was no regular tribute given either to the head of the clan or to the head-man of the village, but both expected to receive gifts of beer about harvest time from the men under them.

The Bagesu sometimes bought slaves, but these were treated as members of the family. Girls were married into the tribe and boys were adopted and allowed to inherit property.

The members of this tribe did not consider fire as in any way sacred. If it could not be obtained in any other way they would make it with fire-sticks, but they preferred, when possible, to carry it with them, in the form of a smouldering torch of wood or tow, or to obtain it from some other member of the clan.

## CHAPTER II

## RELIGION

The creator—offerings—rock and water spirits—god of plague—god of smallpox—sacred skulls and stones—rain-making—punishment of rain-maker—rain-making ceremonies

THE religious ideas of the Bagesu were vague and unformed, and though there was a belief in a creator, known as *Weri Kubumba*, he was not often troubled with requests of any kind. It was to him that offerings were made during the ceremonies of initiation, and his priest conveyed his blessing to the boys who were undergoing the rites. He might, also, be appealed to at times in cases of serious illness.

If there was a year in which the cows did not bear well, the herdsmen took them to a specially prepared shrine; one barren cow was offered to the god by the priest, who then drank beer that had been blessed and puffed it over the other cows. The dedicated cow was killed and a feast made for all the cow-owners, after which the herds were taken back to their places.

Certain rocks or large boulders were believed to be the homes of different spirits, who at times demanded particular attention and offerings. Very often the chief or head-man of a village near one of these rocks acted as priest or medium for the spirit and would inform the people when the spirit desired a shrine to be built and offerings to be made. The following paragraphs from the *Northern Bantu* give further particulars regarding these rock-spirits:

When a spirit appears to an elder, he announces the fact to his village and orders a shrine to be built at the base of some rock and offerings to be made. The wealthier people take goats, others take fowls, and the children carry plantains or sweet potatoes. The animals are offered and killed, the blood is caught in a vessel and left in the shrine for the spirit, and the meat and food are cooked and eaten by the people on the spot. After one of these visions the elder of the village takes two fowls to the rock and dedicates them to the spirit. One fowl he kills and eats on the spot, the other he takes home to

breed, the eggs being saved and hatched, and the chickens reared and cared for until there are enough to exchange for a female goat. The goat is then kept, together with any young it has, until the elder is able to exchange them for a cow, when this and any calves it has are kept for the spirit by the elder, who may use the milk, and the animals continue to breed and form a herd of cows.

Mothers frequently betake themselves to a rock-spirit when a child falls sick, or when it does not make the progress it should. An offering is made at the base of some rock and she calls to the spirit to have pity on her child and make it well and strong. A man or a woman who is in delicate health will also go to a rock, make an offering and ask the spirit to make him well.

*Waterfall-spirits.* Each waterfall is supposed to have a spirit, and these spirits are thought to be of the greatest help to mothers to make their children thrive. A mother will take her water-pot and climb the steep side of the mountain, get between the rock and the falling water, fill a pot with it and carry it home. It is a dangerous and a difficult task, calling for a cool head and strong nerves. The water is used to sprinkle over the head of the child and is said to give it health and to make it thrive.

*Gibini* was the god of plague, and to him offerings were made when plague attacked anyone. The people offered meat and vegetable food beside trees which were planted before the house, and then, saying "We leave you yours and we eat ours," they took some of the meat and ran away into the forest, where they ate it and deceived the god by returning by a different way.

*Enundu*, taking his name from the disease, was the god of smallpox, to whom a goat was offered whenever the disease appeared.

The only part of a dead man which was not destroyed was his skull, which was kept in the house or set upon a stone outside. A large stone was always placed near the door for the residence of the ghost, and this was called *Mboge*. Frequent if not daily offerings of food and beer were made beside this stone and prayers were offered to the ghost which was supposed to possess it.

### RAIN-MAKING

The rain-maker was one of the most important and influential men of the tribe. His ability to procure the kind of



weather that was wanted was considered beyond dispute and when rain did not come after he had gone through his incantations, no one dreamt of considering him incapable, they said he had not exerted himself and must be induced to use all his power. When the weather continued dry and the people wanted rain, they visited the rain-maker, taking with them a number of fowls of either sex and any colour, and also some food, as gifts to him. He might, however, refuse to act without something more, and might demand a goat or a cow, which he had seen somewhere and coveted. This would then have to be brought before he would begin his work.

When he considered that the gifts were sufficient, he arranged in his house his fetishes, which he kept covered until they were needed, and told them that he wanted rain. He offered a fowl to rejoice the heart of the god and usually smeared some of the blood on the fetishes. Then, going to a well, he brought to the house a pot of water into which he put certain herbs. Up to this point the work was done in his house, but now he brought out the fetishes and sprinkled them with the medicated water from the pot. He also sprinkled the water upwards towards heaven and round him on every side, calling upon the spirit to give rain.

Should this attempt fail, the people brought further presents and the man tried again, but should the rain still refuse to come, the people began to threaten him, and after warning him once or twice, they beat him, carried off all his goods, and burned his house. When such extreme measures had been taken and still no rain fell, they came to the conclusion that they had been too severe in their treatment and they would return all his goods, adding presents, and beg him to bring rain.

When rain had continued too long and dry weather was wanted, the medicine-man went out to a spot where he had planted some sacred trees. There he called to his fetishes and waved his sacred stick to drive away the clouds. If this was unsuccessful, he scraped up some sand soaked with rain which had fallen from the roof of his house, and wrapped it in a

bundle of grass. This he took into his house and put over the fire, so that as it dried it would dry up the rain. If his methods failed, the people treated him in the same way as when he would not bring rain, but he could usually terrify them by the threat that he would retaliate by drying up the rain when it was wanted or sending it when it was not wanted.

More elaborate rain-making ceremonies are described in the *Northern Bantu* as follows:

The usual procedure of a rain-maker is to take two fowls which some suppliant has brought. One fowl he kills by hitting it on the head with a sacred stick; he then cuts it open from the under-side of the beak to the tail, removes the entrails and examines them for marks, these markings being the signs which enable him to tell when the rain may be expected. Some markings cause him to re-place the entrails in the fowl and expose it to the heat of the sun; after a time he shakes the fowl about, and, if the entrails make a noise, he announces that there will be a strong wind which will destroy the crops. The second fowl is killed after the manner of the first and is intended to confirm the inferences drawn from it. Should the rain still delay, the people threaten the man and, unless it comes then, they carry out their threats and punish him, because they are convinced he has the ability to help them and is not using his influence. In most instances, after making an attack upon the rain-maker, the people restore his property, thinking that otherwise the god will be angry with them for their doings, and they make special offerings to the man for the damage they have done.

The rain-maker may consent to take the extreme measure of climbing the mountain and paying a visit to the deity on the top, a step which he asserts is fraught with danger to him and may cost him his life. A black ox and a quantity of beer are brought and taken up the mountain by several village elders, who accompany the rain-maker to a plateau near the top. Here the ox is killed and eaten by the company, with the exception of one leg, at a sacred meal at which the blood is offered to the god. The leg is carried up the mountain to a priest who lives near a sacred pool in which is said to be a large snake which is the god. This pool is the spring which supplies many of the waterfalls upon the mountain. The priest takes the meat and hears the request of the rain-maker. The priest and rain-maker then make a trough of clay near the pool and pour the beer into it. The priest stands near the trough and puts a long beer-tube into the spring in order to suck a little water through it. The snake resents this, for it guards the spring against any person drawing water and is said to capture any man who rashly attempts to do so. When, therefore, the priest attempts to draw water, the snake darts forth and winds its

deadly coils round him, but the odour of the beer saves him, for the reptile smells it, hastily uncoils itself, drinks the beer and is soon helplessly drunk. As soon as the men see it is helpless, they break its fangs and proceed rapidly to fill a number of water-pots from the sacred spring, arranging them round the pool. The water thus drawn and set on the top of the mountain will without fail bring rain, which will continue to fall daily until the priest takes steps to stop it by emptying the pots again. The rain-maker descends the mountain with the elders who have waited for him on the upper plateau and in a short time rain begins to pour down.

The rain-maker now waits, knowing that the people will soon come with offerings and requests to have the rain stopped. When the people have had enough rain and see that their crops will be spoiled for want of sunshine, they go in a body to the rain-maker to beg for sunshine. The rain-maker has now to make a second visit to the serpent-god with an offering of beer, and has to go with the priest through a similar performance to that above described in order to make the god drunk, after which he empties the pots and turns them bottom upwards to ensure sunshine. Thus the harvest is assured, the seasons are readjusted and the year proceeds in its proper course.

## CHAPTER III

### OCCUPATIONS OF THE BAGESU

Possession of land—cultivation of millet—sowing the seed—harvest—granaries—the firstfruits—plantains—other crops—beer from millet and plantains—harvest festival—tobacco—cows, goats, sheep, and fowls—building houses—interior of a house—ghost-stones—potters—smiths—hunting—fishing—warfare

#### AGRICULTURE

WHEN the Bagesu settled on Elgon, the different clans took possession of land on the upper slopes of the ridges and this land was meted out to sub-divisions and within these sub-divisions to the families. These plots of land might never pass out of the sub-division which had taken possession of them, but they might be given by the head-man to different members. When a man was given a new plot and cultivated it, it became his own and he could pass it on to his family. As families grew and increased it became necessary to take



in more land, and the fields gradually extended down the slopes. When the arrival of the British guaranteed their safety from raids, the descent became much more rapid, and the lower valleys and slopes and then the plains were brought under cultivation. The old fields, however, still remained the property of the different clans and members of other clans might not encroach.

The main crop, and now practically the only crop which is grown on the higher slopes, was the small millet, *bulo*. This was as a rule planted only once a year, though at times a catch crop might be raised. They seldom sowed in the same land for more than a few years, for they preferred to let it rest and break up new land or re-plant land that had been resting. The men did the first rough work of cutting down the shrubs and coarse grass and preparing the place for digging, but the women turned up the soil with wooden hoes or digging sticks, for until within recent years iron hoes were unknown. In the *Northern Bantu*, I have noted the fact that women did the rough digging, leaving the work to be finished by the men. This arrangement is to be found among some of the clans on the south-east slopes of the mountain, and is opposed to the practice of most tribes. In later years, the people bought hoes from smiths of other nations and used them until they were worn out, when the local smiths made them into spears or knives. There were originally no smiths in the tribe, and those who appeared in later days made only knives, arrow-heads, and spears. The earth was turned over with hoes or digging sticks to a depth of some eight or ten inches, and the grain was sown upon this land without further preparation.

Sometimes before a woman sowed, she took some of her seed to be blessed by a medicine-man and mixed this with the remainder; as a rule, however, she paid no attention to such precautions, but simply set out in the early morning with the basket of seed and a few hot embers or a smouldering torch to make a fire. When she reached her field she first lit her fire, to which she would retire for rest and to light her pipe. During the sowing the fire had to be guarded lest anyone

should take any of it, for this would rob the grain of its vitality. The woman sometimes put a few seeds in her pipe and blew the smoke over the field to make the seed grow. A pot of beer was sometimes poured out on a new field before the sowing took place to secure the favour of the earth spirit. With her hoe or stick the woman raised a little earth to a depth of two or three inches, dropped in a few seeds, and pushed back the earth with her foot; then taking a short pace she repeated the performance. Sometimes the husband assisted his wife with the sowing, and then she made the holes for the seed while he followed, dropping two or three grains in each hole and pushing a little earth over them with his foot.

When the crop had grown to a height of about three inches, the husband weeded it and thinned it out, leaving the plants some twelve inches apart, and as it grew he helped to protect it from wild animals, especially pigs. In some places it was necessary to guard the crops by night, and for this purpose the men built huts in the fields and kept fires burning brightly. The presence of a man with a fire was generally enough to keep animals at a distance. The crop usually grew to a height of some eighteen inches, and when the grain was in the ear, children were employed from early morning until dusk in driving off birds.

When the grain was ripe, husband and wife had to work together to reap the harvest, but before any of the new corn was used for food, some of it was gathered and sent, with a little of the last year's corn and a fowl, to a medicine-man, who offered them to a special deity before anyone in the village might partake of the new corn. Such an offering freed the village from taboo and enabled its members to begin eating the new crop. The heads of grain were cut off short and either spread to dry on ground prepared in the field or tied up in bundles and carried to the hard ground before the hut door, where they were covered at night with plantain leaves. When dry, the grain was stored in the ear, the granaries being large wicker baskets with movable covers, four to five feet

high and three feet in diameter, raised from the ground on tree stumps or large stones. The baskets were smeared on the inside and sometimes on the outside with dung, to protect the grain from the weather and from insects and to keep it from leaking through the wicker-work. From these stores the grain was taken out, threshed with short sticks, and winnowed when required.

The first of the crop had to be eaten by the man and his wife together; if he was not at home, the wife used the grain, but put aside a piece of the first porridge cooked for him to eat on his return.

Plantains of several kinds, some used for food and some for beer, were grown, but the trees seldom bore well because of the cold on the high slopes of the mountain. Now, however, that the people have come further down towards the plains, the upper slopes are left for millet and plantains are grown in the valleys. The women did the digging when cultivating plantains, and the men pruned the trees. The plantain as food was generally eaten boiled, as they cooked potatoes, and it was found very useful when their supply of grain ran short, for the trees bore all the year round.

Sweet potatoes were in general use and semsem was grown but was not used as a food. It was ground, mixed with water and boiled, when possible a little salt was added, and it was eaten with other food as a relish. Maize, beans, marrows, and small tomatoes were also grown as luxuries.

Each wife had her own field and kept her own store of food, and a husband visited his wives in turn and ate with them. When he wanted beer they all contributed a share, and when guests came, the men were given one house and the women another, the two parties drinking separately.

### BREWING

After the harvest had been reaped brewing commenced, and the people used for this all the grain they could spare. This was prepared by being threshed, sifted, mixed with a little water, and left for about five days until it sprouted,

when it was dried in the sun, baked, and ground to a coarse flour. To this flour water was added and this was left standing for two days, when boiling water was poured on it and it was drunk while hot.

When beer was made from plantains, the fruit was hung over the fire and thus artificially ripened, after which it was pulped in large wooden troughs. The juice was drained off into pots and a little malt, that is, millet prepared as described above, was added. After having stood for two days, this was ready for use. This beer was not very intoxicating, but after the men had sat for hours drinking it through long tubes, they were completely under its influence.

### HARVEST FESTIVAL

When the beer was ready, the members from all the clans gathered at the villages for the beer drinking, of which something has already been said. Men and women went together to the different villages, but the women had their own pots and drank as freely as the men, though they were not expected to wander so far in search of the beer as the men did. Both parties sat round their pots at different distances according to the length of their tubes, and talked and drank until they were too helpless to go on longer, when they were carried away to sleep off the effects of the drink. Sometimes a man and his wife would take turns in drinking. The man would drink until he could stand no more, when his wife would put him to bed and care for him until he recovered. She would then take her turn at the drinking and he would care for her. When the beer at one village was exhausted the company went on to another where the drinking was resumed.

Dancing was also indulged in at these festivals, drums and bells being the only instruments used. Under the influence of the beer and the excitement of dancing, all restraint was thrown off and free love was indulged in, though there were a few men who even then jealously guarded their wives. If there was a moon, and the new moon was invariably awaited

before the festivities began, the dancing and drinking would go on far into the night.

### TOBACCO

Tobacco has been in use for so long that no one can tell how it was introduced. The women grew it on the dust-heaps near the houses, where they could guard it. Both the ashes of the fire and the sweepings of the house, in which the animals were kept by night, were thrown upon this heap, so that the ground was rich and the plants flourished luxuriantly. When the leaves were fully grown the women plucked and pounded them, being careful not to lose the juice, and made them into cakes, which were dried in the sun until they were a rich dark colour, when they were considered ready for use and were stored in the house.

Both men and women smoked tobacco, but women never chewed it, whereas men at times did so. Of recent years Indian hemp has been grown and is smoked by many of the people, much to their detriment.

### DOMESTIC ANIMALS

The Bagesu kept only a few cows, three or four being the largest number possessed by any man, because the chief object was to gather a sufficient number and with them to purchase another wife. The cows were kept in the houses by night and were herded by either men or women, there being no restrictions to prevent the wife or daughter from looking after the cattle, and even children frequently herded the cows with the goats. Several children would combine to do the work, leaving the animals to roam about on the hill-sides whilst they played their games. These cows were small, and hardy enough to endure the cold of the mountains and also the heat of the day in the more sheltered spots. Like most African cows they gave little milk, two to three pints being all that could safely be taken without depriving the calf of its necessary nourishment. The milk was never drunk fresh but was boiled, sometimes with salt, until all the moisture



was gone, leaving a cake which was eaten. Butter was chiefly used for smearing on the body, though it was sometimes added to food.

While in the huts the cows were tied by the neck, but a bull was always left free. When a cow calved, the milk for the first three or four days was cooked and the cake eaten by small children.

Each householder had his goats and a few sheep, the latter being always poor miserable-looking creatures, with but little flesh. Goats were the more prized, not only because they multiplied more rapidly, but also because they grew bigger and were always in better condition. Both goats and sheep were tied to pegs in the floor round the side of the hut by night, sheep and female goats by the neck and male goats by the leg. These animals, however, were never kept in great numbers, for the tribe was pre-eminently agricultural, and animals were used mainly as currency, for obtaining wives or for the payment of debts.

Fowls were also kept, and a small cage was built for them on one side of the house to keep them from wild cats by night. They were never fed, but had to hunt for their own food, with the natural result that they were seldom in good condition for the table.

### BUILDING

When a man made up his mind that he would leave his old home and build a new house, he first consulted various auguries to see if the ghosts approved of his intention, and if the move would be to his advantage. He arranged the site of the house with the head-man of the village in which he intended to settle, and took up his abode with friends or relatives near the place. He had to observe only two taboos of importance during the time of building: if during the building a child was born in the house where he was staying, he did not go to work for four days, and if a dog had puppies, he stayed at home two days.

The man then cut his trees and carried them to the ap-

pointed site. He had to prepare a number of stout stakes some five feet long for the outer walls, a central post and four others to support the roof, a quantity of slender saplings or bamboos to make the roof, and grass for thatching.

When all the materials had been collected, he called together his friends to help him in levelling the ground, for the site was usually on the side of a hill. A circle was then marked out and a shallow trench dug, in which the stakes for the outer wall were planted a few inches deep, making a wall about four or five feet high. These were laced together with creeper rope in two places, about half-way up and again near the top. The posts for carrying the roof were put in, a long one in the centre which decided the pitch of the roof, and four others round it. At times the owner would do the work up to this point himself, but in any case he now called in his friends to help in the finishing of the house, and he brewed a quantity of beer, which was the only payment given to those who assisted him in the work.

The saplings or bamboos were arranged radiating from the central post to the outer wall, upon which they rested, looking like the ribs of a great umbrella, and the spaces between them were filled with smaller bamboos, or with elephant grass, laced together with bark rope, and on this frame-work was laid a grass thatch. The ends of the roof-poles were cut so that all projected to an even length over the wall. The grass used as thatch was a coarse kind which grew about a foot and a half long. The root ends were laid uppermost and each layer was placed a few inches higher than the one before, thus making a good thick layer of thatch, and on the pinnacle was a tuft so arranged as to make the point of the roof water-tight.

The wife and her friends then plastered mud over the walls, filling up all the crevices and smoothing the mud with their hands. When the walls were smooth, they smeared them with cow-dung, sometimes mixed with mud. The women also made the floor smooth by beating the earth with the palms of the hands or with the flat side of hoes.

The fire-place was in the centre of the hut near the central

post, against which a flat stone was placed to keep it from being burned. The fire was usually brought from another house though, if there was difficulty in procuring it, they made it with fire-sticks, for there was no ritual for the use of fire. There was no chimney or outlet for the smoke except the doorway, but the conical roof drew it up and it filtered through the thatch. No window was ever considered necessary, for the door afforded all the light and air the inhabitants required.

In most of the houses there was no furniture, and the majority of the people slept on the floor near the fire without covering of any kind. In a few cases among the more enlightened people beds might be found. Four posts with forked tops were planted in the ground and in the forks were fixed side- and foot- and head-pieces. Very rough cross-pieces were laid over these and the whole was covered with a cow-skin.

To one side of the doorway one or two large stones were at times placed, and on them might be put the skull of some member of the family who had died. Before these stones beer was poured out for the ghost and other offerings were made. A small shrine for some family ghost might also be found near, and sometimes reeds or trees were planted in front of the house and a few shells were hung on them; these were for the residence of some ghost which had been troubling the family.

#### POTTERS

Both men and women were potters, but their work was very primitive and the vessels very irregular in shape. Their clay, which they called *lidiri*, was procured from the river beds; and they were careful always to bake their pots between new and full moon and not while it was waning. Any woman with child had to keep away from the pots while they were being made, and no women except the makers might approach during the baking; but their taboos were few and not of much importance.

#### SMITHS

There were very few smiths and no smelters; indeed iron-stone was not known, and the smiths bought their metal



ready for use. They made only spears and knives and rough ornaments. Spades and hoes the people bought ready made from Kitara and Busoga.

### HUNTING

Various wild animals, mostly small antelope, were hunted for the sake of their meat, but others, such as lions or leopards, were only hunted when they became troublesome and attacked people. Lions were not common, though a stray beast might wander into the mountain for a few days, but leopards were plentiful, and when one was killed the meat was eaten and the skin used as a rug or sold. Though a few people understood and used nets, practically all hunting was done with the spear.

Herds of elephants occasionally appeared in the district, when a hunting party would be formed and an attempt made to kill one. At one time their only value lay in their meat, but in later years the ivory was sold to traders. When men went out to hunt elephants, the chief hunters concealed themselves in the branches of trees with spears, which were made with heavy shafts and attached by a rope to the tree. Other men acted as beaters and drove the animals under the trees where the hunters could kill them with their spears. The man who first speared an elephant claimed the tusks, which he sold; but there was no specific method of dividing the meat, and the men simply fought for what they could get.

Should a man be killed when out hunting, they brought the body home, in order, they said, that they might mourn. The real reason, however, was that the mourners might hold their feast on the flesh and that the proper ceremonies to release the ghost for its journey to the other world might be carried out.

Large herbivorous rats were a favourite food, and various methods were adopted to catch these animals. Some men might beat the grass, while others remained by the runs and caught or struck the rats with sticks as they ran along. They sometimes also used snares, which consisted of a string with

a noose attached to a bent stick in such a way that the rat in passing through the noose released the stick and was caught and strangled.

### FISHING

Fish was a favourite food, and men living near streams followed various methods of fishing. They sometimes caught them by hand, but the most common method was to dam a stream and divert its water into pools into which they waded, catching the fish in wicker baskets. Fish were cooked and eaten fresh, or dried over wood fires and boiled when needed.

### WARFARE

Clans had frequent disputes, and petty wars of clan against clan were common, while lonely pedestrians would be attacked and even killed by fellow-tribesmen of different clans. War on a larger scale was often caused by an attack by some daring spirits of one clan on the cattle of another while they were out at pasture. As soon as the theft had been committed, the war-horns were sounded and drums were beaten and men from all parts came to join in the fight. The attackers retreated to a hill and the opposing force gathered on another facing them. As soon as a large enough army had come together they advanced until they could shoot their arrows and throw their spears. The arrows were the more effective weapon, for they were always treated with a virulent poison and even a scratch was certain to cause death. The men too were very skilful in their use and very accurate in aim.

As the excitement grew men would rush out from the main bodies and meet each other in hand-to-hand combats. The fall of one of these warriors had an immediate effect on the army to which he belonged and might even put them to flight. When one party fled the others would follow them up into their territory, plundering and burning their houses as they passed along. Any men who were overtaken or who were found wounded were killed, a hand was cut off and tied to a stick and the victor carried it aloft in triumph; women and children were captured and carried off.

When a man who had killed one of the enemy reached home, he had to be purified before he might enter his house. His relatives brought him a goat which he killed, smearing the contents of the stomach upon himself, his wife, the children, and the door-posts. Until he was thus purified he had to eat apart from his companions, taking his food from a bowl with a stick, but after this cleansing he returned to his ordinary life and rejoined his wife in the house.

Wounded men were if possible brought home by their companions and were treated with care. They said that the *Mulindi*, that is, the relatives who ate the dead, came and carried away the bodies of the slain, for should the body be left to decay, the ghost would attack children with various diseases. The relatives of a dead man would keep up a feud against the clan who had killed him and would watch for years for an opportunity of killing some member of it in order to satisfy the ghost; for nothing short of death could compensate for death.

The Bankoko from the south of the mountain would never unite with men of clans from the north against any enemy, for they were deadly foes and only met in amity during the harvest festivals, when the members might even intermarry.

## CHAPTER IV

### BIRTH, INITIATION, AND MARRIAGE

Taboos during pregnancy—birth—naming children—period of seclusion—death of children—weaning children—making a child sit up—the first teeth—birth of twins—bringing-out of twins—death of twins—training children—extracting teeth—adoption—initiation—cicatrizatio-  
tion by girls—initiation of boys—preparation—initiation festival—taking the oath—circumcision—feast after healing—marriage—fornication—clan exogamy and polygamy—arranging marriages—bringing the bride—marriage before initiation—taboos concerning parents-in-law—divorce and adultery

WHEN a woman conceived, her husband's father was informed and he sent a cow in return for the good news. This

was killed, and the husband, the wife, and the members of the clan feasted on the meat. A woman during pregnancy observed no restrictions or food taboos, and she might arrange her diet to suit herself. Her husband had to refrain from climbing any trees or high rocks or on to house roofs, and when walking down a hill he had to go carefully, for should he slip and fall, his wife might have a miscarriage.

When the time of birth approached, several friends of the woman came to be with her, but one person, as a rule the husband's mother or aunt, was chosen to act as midwife. The expectant woman stood by a post in the house, and one of the assistants held her under the arms and raised her up and down in order to shake the child down and help on the birth. The midwife stood in front of the patient to receive the child; when it was born she tied the cord a few inches from it and cut it with a strip of reed from the roof. The baby was handed to one of the assistants, who washed its head, face, and mouth, and started respiration. The midwife then waited for the afterbirth, which in most cases was carefully buried outside near the house, in a place where the refuse from the house was afterwards thrown. In some clans, however, the afterbirth was simply thrown out and left for dogs or wild animals to devour.

A little beer was poured out at the post where the child was born, and two trees, named *mbaga* and *mwima*, were planted in front of the house near the door for the residence of the good spirit who came to be the guardian of the child.

The child was named as soon as possible after its birth, by the father if it was a boy and by the mother if it was a girl. In either case, it was called after some deceased ancestor of the father's clan whose ghost was then expected to look after it. If the child did not thrive, the parents consulted a medicine-man, who took an augury, and would sometimes advise them to change the child's name, for the ghost whose name it bore was causing the trouble and another ghost had to be called upon to befriend it.

For fifteen days after the birth, the mother remained in

seclusion in the house, and when this period was over she was taken out and washed all over and the hair on both head and body was shaved off. While she was undergoing this purification, the house was swept out and cleaned.

Children often died at birth or in infancy, and the bodies were thrown out into the bush as with adults. It is most probable that these bodies were eaten as were those of adults after death, but it is difficult to obtain proof.

Women were said to have as many as ten children, but as a rule only about half of them lived. A woman whose children died in infancy had usually a large number, for she returned to her husband and probably became pregnant again very soon, whereas if she were nursing a child she kept away from him for two to three years. A child was generally not weaned until the mother had become pregnant again; there was no ceremony at weaning—the child was simply kept by a relative in some place where it did not see its mother.

When a child was three months old, the mother took it to her mother, who put it to sit on the floor. A goat was killed and a feast took place with much beer-drinking. It was usual for the children of the village to take part in this feast.

Little importance was attached to the order in which the first teeth were cut, though if the lower teeth came first it was considered satisfactory.

### TWINS

When the midwife saw that there were twins, she might not remove the children from the spot where they were born before she had obtained the sanction of the medicine-man. He was therefore speedily summoned and was given a fowl which he offered to the gods. After the sacrifice he closed the house against visitors, the husband remaining in one half of it, while the wife and children were in the other.

The cord of each child was cut as in the case of other children and the placenta carried to some place near the house and buried where the sweepings from the hut might be



thrown upon the spot. In the early morning, in the evening, and at intervals during the day, two small drums, one for each child, were beaten.

On the third day, the heads of the twins were shaved and their nails pared and then for seven months the father collected fowls, goats and promises of food for the ceremony of bringing the twins out for inspection. The father's parents killed a goat while the mother's parents brought fowls, and large quantities of beer were brewed. The members of the two clans gathered and danced in two parties, the father leading his relatives and the mother hers. They drank beer and blew it over the members of the other party as they danced, the idea, as in other tribes, being to divert from themselves any evil which might be attached to the twins and cast it on the other clan.

There was greatest rejoicing when the twins were one of each sex; for should they both be of one sex, the parent who was not represented knew that the wrath of the gods was for some reason directed against him, and he and his clan had to make many offerings to pacify them.

Should one of the children die before this bringing-out ceremony, a small hut was built over the spot where the placenta was buried and the body was placed in it. One of the drums was removed and only one was beaten daily.

Until they were fully grown, children who were twins wore special anklets, but after puberty and marriage they ceased to be thus distinguished from ordinary people.

Boys and girls were taught to be useful at as early an age as possible. Boys had to go and learn to herd and care for the goats and sheep, and girls had to dig in the fields, carry firewood and water, and learn to cook. At the age of about eight or ten years, both girls and boys had the two lower incisors extracted. This was not a compulsory operation, but anyone who refused to have it done was looked upon as a coward and called "animal" and "monkey."

People seldom adopted children and when they did there was no ceremony. Adoption was rarely permanent and the child would be sent back to its own home after a time.

## INITIATION

About the age of ten or twelve years girls of the Bagesu began to make on the body and forehead the markings which were the sign of clan membership. The wounds were made with an iron needle with a point at one end and a ring at the other, which was put round the finger, the needle being curved so that it lay round the back of the hand. The girl carried this about with her and made the wounds on her body herself, though those on the forehead had to be made by someone else. She pinched up a little skin, ran the needle through it, and then made an incision down to the needle at right angles to it. She rubbed wood ashes into the wound and left it to heal; as the wounds often festered and were very painful, it took some time to complete the markings. When healed the keloids stood out in hard lumps like warts, those on the forehead being as large as peas. Some were made oval in shape and others round, and they were arranged in lines, spaced in different ways according to the fashion of the clan to which the girl belonged. Four lines of keloids were usually made running from the breasts downwards, and two lines on the forehead running down the temples. A woman who had not these keloids would not be accepted in marriage and was not allowed to join the grown women as one of them, for she was still looked upon as a child.

Boys had to go through an elaborate ceremony of initiation and a form of circumcision before they were considered fit for marriage or to take part in the councils of the men of the clan. No force was employed to induce the boys to undergo this ceremony, but until they had been operated upon, they were regarded as children and might not wear clothing or join the men either in the councils or in beer-drinking. Parents and friends were therefore anxious for the boys to be initiated as early as possible. No account was kept of a child's age, but as soon as a boy showed signs of reaching puberty, he was told that he should prepare himself to attend the next initiation ceremonies.



These ceremonies took place as a rule every second or third year in each district, and the people chose a year when the harvest was plentiful so that they might brew large quantities of beer and make great preparations. If the harvest yield was a poor one, the ceremony was postponed until another year.

The boys who decided to undergo the ceremony met daily for some two to four months before the day appointed for the event, and they went from village to village dancing and receiving presents from the people. These presents always consisted of animals or fowls and they were collected together at the village in which the ceremony was to take place, because hundreds of people gathered there for the event and all had to be fed and entertained. The boys were led by a man who knew the songs they were expected to sing and undertook to train them. He took them from place to place to dance, and as he sang he instructed them in various clan matters which were of a public character and not of great importance, for the more careful teaching of the clan secrets was undertaken in private by old men appointed by the clan. There was no tune in the songs; words were simply drawled out in a sort of rhythm to which the boys stamped their feet as they moved round in a circle. Whenever they could get them they wore thigh bells, which were three or four iron bells like cow-bells, strung round the right thigh so that they rattled as the wearer stamped to the rhythm. The boys' faces and bodies were painted with red ochre and well oiled, and they carried reeds or thin bamboos which they held aloft as they stamped about and sang.

The time set for the ceremony was two or three days after the appearance of the new moon, when the boys from the different villages met at an arranged place. In the early morning of the appointed day, a priest with one or more followers, one of whom was the chief in whose village the ceremony was taking place, went to the mountain shrine of the creator, *Weri*, which was under the shade of a large tree and near a spring of water. They took with them a fowl, usually white, and two eggs; the fowl was offered to the god



Bagesu initiation dance



Bagesu initiation dance. Thigh bells



Instructing the youths upon taking the oath



Giving the youths roots to chew  
to strengthen them

### Bagesu Initiation Ceremony

and was then killed and left at the foot of the sacred tree, while the eggs were broken in the path for a snake who was supposed to be in the tree<sup>1</sup>.

The boys, of whom there might be a dozen or more, were then brought by the priest and the chief to the forest. If there were among them any sons of chiefs or wealthy men, one or more bulls might be available for the feast, but failing sons of wealthy men, there would be only goats. One animal was taken with them to the forest and offered to the god, after which it was killed and the contents of the stomach, mixed with water, were smeared over the bodies of the boys. A plentiful supply of cooked vegetable food and beer had also been brought, and the meat of the animal which had been offered to the god was cooked and eaten with this as a sacred meal, while the priest pronounced the god's blessing on each boy.

When the meal was over and they had drunk freely of the beer, the boys went back to the village, going the whole way at a rapid trot, for they were not allowed to walk. If a second bull had been given by one of the fathers, it was killed near the place where the ceremony was to take place, and the meat was taken to the house of the head-man of the village, where the priest cut it into small pieces and, climbing to the top of the house, threw it among the assembled people in the name of the boy whose father had given it. There was a great scramble for the pieces of meat, for they were believed to confer a special blessing if taken home and eaten. The breast was hung round the boy's neck for a time before being removed and eaten.

By this time it would be noon, and dancing went on vigorously, the excitement increasing rapidly. The boys pranced up and down a space about two hundred yards long, brandishing their heavy clubs or sticks in the air. From time to time one of them rushed into the surrounding crowd, striking about

<sup>1</sup> In many parts of Africa a green tree snake with an orange tint underneath it near the head, frequents trees by springs to feed upon small birds as they come to the water. This snake is invariably sacred.

in a furious manner. He was said to be under the influence of some spirit and to be driving off an evil ghost; he was usually completely regardless as to where his blows fell and struck at anyone who was not quick enough to get out of his way, so that serious wounds and often deaths were caused at this time. From the appearance of the eyes of the boys I saw undergoing these ceremonies, I concluded that the state of possession was feigned; though they were at a high pitch of excitement, most of them clearly knew what they were doing. The spectators who surrounded the youths and followed them about shared in the excitement, and women often became hysterical and shook all over, dancing, as the people said, under the influence of the spirit.

Early in the afternoon, the boys were summoned by the chief and rushed away to the mountain where the priest awaited them at the shrine. Each boy was again blessed and his face and body was smeared with white clay. This visit took about an hour and by that time the boys, with the beer and the dancing, were in such a state of excitement that someone was needed to guide and help them as they returned to their own villages. This journey had again to be performed at a run; the priest and his assistants followed them, and they were operated upon at their own villages.

When the boys arrived they stood in a line and a log was placed behind them, which they might later use as a seat if necessary. Plantain leaves, sometimes one for each boy, sometimes one between two or three, were laid on the ground in front of them. Each leaf was arranged like a dish and in it was put an egg, covered with a thin piece of gourd, and a little water; a bunch of sacred herbs was placed beside each. A group of excited admirers stood round the youths, singing to them and keeping up their courage and the excitement. The boys stood erect and now and then jumped into the air with both feet together, keeping their legs straight and their arms stretched above their heads.

An elderly man came forward and described to the boys their duty to the clan, admonishing them to be faithful.





Taking the oath



Performing the operation

Bagesu Initiation Ceremony





When they had agreed, by an exclamation of "Eh!" to follow the customs and rules of the clan, he took the bunch of herbs, dipped it in the water, and sprinkled each with a sharp swish on the face and chest. One of the youths next jumped forward with his feet together until he reached the plantain, then, making three jumps in the air, still keeping his legs straight, he came down the third time on the leaf and the egg. It was not necessary to break the egg, and in some places one egg did for three or four boys.

When all had thus sealed their vows, a man came with a packet of sacred powder, some of which he placed on a knife-blade and poured upon the boys' heads to give blessing and courage. The mother of a boy also often came forward at this time with a root for her son to chew, which was supposed to check excessive bleeding.

When the boys were all ready, a medicine-man, who had been concealed in one of the huts, came out with a large knife, which looked anything but aseptic. Approaching the first boy he pulled the foreskin forward as far as it would stretch and cut it off, throwing it at the boy's feet. He did not stop to examine his work but passed on to the next boy until he had finished the row, when he went away. The boys paid no attention to what was being done but stood with their arms stretched up and each jumped in the air as soon as the man had passed on to the next one. Another medicine-man followed with an assistant, who held the penis out at full length while the medicine-man pinched up and cut off every bit of skin except a strip along the passage underneath. This took some minutes for he was quite deliberate and cast each bit of skin on the ground at the boy's feet as he cut it off. When he had finished the boy had to keep his arms raised and jump into the air coming down upon his own skin and blood and shouting a special cry. Meanwhile old people examined the member to see that the work was properly done. When the next boy's operation was over, the first might sit down on the log behind him; no dressing was applied, but they waited until all were finished, when they were led away to a special house, where they



## MARRIAGE

Though boys and girls remained at home and slept together on the floor until they were married, they refrained from sexual relations, for such connection between members of the same clan was an unforgivable offence and death was the certain punishment for the injury. Girls, however, went, always in companies, to the young men of other clans to gratify their passions, and a girl was not blamed for having relations with men so long as she did not bear a child. Even if she did, however, there was no punishment, but the man was expected to pay the marriage fee and marry her. Should he refuse, the child was born at the girl's home, and, unless its father paid a goat to redeem it, it remained with her.

Clan exogamy was strictly enforced and blood relationships were carefully considered in all cases. The tribe was polygamous, but often lack of means prevented men from having more than one wife. No wife objected to her husband's marrying another woman, but each expected to be supplied with a house and field of her own. A man usually refrained from marrying two sisters, and even avoided marrying two women from the same clan because they were regarded as sisters.

Marriages were usually arranged during the harvest season, for at other times it was not safe for members of different clans to enter each other's territory. Fathers sometimes arranged marriages for their sons, but during the festivities boys and girls met and as a rule settled their own affairs with regard to marriage. They might, in fact, as I have already remarked, go at once to live together, and in that case the man had to arrange matters concerning the marriage fee while they lived as a married couple. When a couple had agreed that they wished to marry, the boy might ask his father or a friend to go to the girl's parents and make enquiries about the marriage fee. As it was not safe for a man to travel alone, the messenger had to take three or four companions with him. On his arrival he made an offer to which the girl's parents might agree at once, or there might be some

bargaining before the matter was settled. The usual sum was three or four cows, but as many as ten might be asked for and goats might be demanded in addition.

The girl's parents then required some time for preparations, for they had to brew a pot of beer for the girl to take with her. The girl went about her usual occupations, but she was instructed in the duties of a wife; she was fed on the best food her parents could obtain that she might grow fat, and she was daily washed and her body rubbed with oil to make her skin smooth and soft.

When the bridegroom sent the cows, he had also to present a spear and a hoe, and in return the father despatched his daughter with a pot of beer, saying, "Go and rejoice the man's heart." She was accompanied by a number of girl friends who took their hoes with them and remained three days, digging the field for the bride. Men did not as a rule venture to accompany a bride, for only women were safe to travel among other clans once the harvest season was past. The bridegroom supplied the party with food and gave them presents of fowls, spades, or cowry-shells. In some cases, the bridegroom's mother cooked for these guests and invited them to have their meal with her; they, however, were not expected to comply with this invitation but had to take the food and eat it in private when there were no other women present.

At the end of three days the bride and her companions were sent back to her parents with a gift of a sheep. There they feasted and danced before dispersing to their own homes. When the new moon appeared, the bride returned to her husband, sometimes taking with her a pot of beer and a goat, and accompanied by one relative, who stayed for a night.

There was no marriage ceremony and no period of seclusion, because the woman went to work in her field the day after she arrived in her new home. The husband had built his house and prepared his land before he asked her to come to him.

A woman would sometimes agree to marry a man who had not been initiated, and her relatives would consent, on the understanding that he would undergo the operation of cir-

cumcision on the next opportunity. If when the time came he refused, his wife would leave him and return to her parents, for no woman cared to live with a man who was too timid to undergo the trial. She also realised that his refusal placed her and her children along with him outside his clan, which meant that she could not count on the help of clan-fellows in time of trouble.

From the time of his marriage the parents of a bridegroom never entered his house and never saw his wife nor spoke to her. If the wife was ill, her mother-in-law would arrange to meet her at some place outside her house, and she would attend to her in child-birth, but these were the only occasions of meeting. The husband might see and speak to his father-in-law, but he might not meet his mother-in-law and had to leave the path if she were on it.

If a man found that a wife was barren he might divorce her, but he often kept the barren wife to cook for him and married another, by whom he would have children. There was little jealousy between men on account of women. If a woman committed adultery, she usually deserted her husband and went to the man, and the husband demanded from him the amount of the marriage fee he had paid to her parents and married another wife, though if the wife who had deserted him returned, he would accept her. Sometimes, however, a man who discovered that his wife was unfaithful would vent his wrath both upon her and upon the man who had wronged him, and would spear him whenever opportunity offered. A man who found his brother with his wife might fine him or seize his goods.

While menstruating, a woman avoided touching her husband's weapons and, if possible, did not cook his food, though she would do so if he had no other wife.

Bagesu women were not so docile as wives in other tribes, and unless a husband asserted himself vigorously, there was constant bickering. A wife would not hesitate to attack her husband with her hands, a stick, or a knife, and a man of a quiet disposition was often completely ruled by his wife.



## CHAPTER V

## SICKNESS, DEATH, AND INHERITANCE

Causes of illness—bleeding and blistering—illness due to the god *Weri*—illness due to ghosts—illness due to magic—bubonic plague—small-pox—other methods of treatment—eating the dead—widows—suicide—manslaughter—murder—inheritance

## SICKNESS

FEW people attained to any great age, for the hardships of existence were such that both men and women generally succumbed before sixty. The fact, however, that a few people lived longer might have been taken as proof that illness and death were, as was generally believed, due to the influence of some superhuman power. Illness was therefore always ascribed either to ghosts or to magic exerted by some ill-disposed person.

When a man fell ill of some minor complaint, his wife might treat him. For headache, for swellings on the limbs (such as abscesses), or for pains in the chest, bleeding by cupping was often resorted to, and it was essential that this should be done by a relative and not by a person belonging to a different clan. The cup used was some three inches from the pointed end of a cow's horn, with a hole made in the side near the point. A few scratches were made on the flesh, the spot was wetted, and the broad end of the horn placed firmly over it. The air was sucked out and a plug of fibre, previously put into the mouth, was inserted in the hole with the tip of the tongue. When the right amount of blood had been drawn off, the plug was withdrawn, the horn taken off, and the place sponged. At other times it was considered advisable to blister a patient, and for this purpose a stick, of the same kind as that used for the fire-sticks, which had been thrust into the fire or made burning hot by friction, was applied to the place where the pain was felt.

If the illness increased, the wife summoned the man's

relatives. If they thought it necessary they called in a medicine-man and gave him a goat that he might by an augury find out the cause of the illness and how to deal with it.

Should the augury indicate that the illness was due to the god *Weri*, a goat and two long branches of a tree were brought to the house in which the sick man lay. The branches were planted outside near the door to form a resort or shrine for the god, and the goat was offered to him beside them. If the goat urinated while the preparations for the offering were being made, it was a sign that the god accepted it, whereupon it was taken away with beating of drums to the forest, where it was killed and eaten. If, however, the god did not thus signify his acceptance, the goat was taken back to the herd and another brought and tied near the trees for a short time to see whether the god accepted it, in which case it was taken to the forest and sacrificed.

When a ghost was causing illness, a bull was brought and killed near the man's house, and the medicine-man examined the entrails. The body was presented to the ghost, which was told to come and eat it; after which the medicine-man and his followers carried the meat to a distance where they ate it, for the members of the sick man's family might not touch it lest they should contract the illness.

When a woman was ill, the husband called in a medicine-man who demanded a fowl or a goat for the augury. If he decided that the illness was caused by a ghost which had taken possession of the woman, he killed an animal, cooked some of the meat, and with it tempted the ghost to leave the patient. If this did not succeed he proceeded to more vigorous methods, and tried to frighten the ghost by threats or to smoke it out by burning herbs, wool, or feathers. He invariably planted before the door of the house two trees or reeds in which the ghost could take up its residence when it had left the patient. Offerings of beer and food for the ghost were placed beneath these trees from time to time.

People who claimed to be magic-workers believed firmly in

their own powers, and the general belief in and fear of magic was so great that the suggestion of its presence was enough to throw a man into such a condition of nervousness that he was quite likely to die of fear.

When a medicine-man found by augury that magic was the cause of illness, he proceeded to discover the guilty person, and advised the relatives to call together the members of the clan and the culprit that they might come to an agreement. A cow was killed and the people ate a sacred meal, adjuring the magic-worker to remove his spell. When he had been persuaded to do so, possibly by the payment of an animal or by the settlement of some dispute, the illness could be treated with ordinary remedies.

Should a man die under the influence of magic, his relatives held the magic-worker responsible for the death, and would kill him in revenge.

If a man fell ill of bubonic plague, the medicine-man ordered the relatives to make an offering of an animal, a fowl, and some vegetable food to the god of plague. The animal was killed and the medicine-man wore the skin during the ceremony. The relatives offered some of the food to the god beside trees which had been planted by the door, saying, "We leave you this and we eat the rest"; they carried away the rest of the food to the forest, where they ate it, and returned to the house by a different path.

When smallpox (*enundu*) broke out in a house, a goat was sacrificed and the villagers built a fence round the hut to stop the disease from spreading. The inmates of the house were left to look after each other, and if one died, the body was carried to waste land and eaten there by relatives who had already had the disease and who were deputed to perform the mourning ceremonies.

When a medicine-man succeeded in curing a patient, he was given an extra present.

The following notes with regard to illness are quoted from the *Northern Bantu* and were collected among some other clans of the tribe:

The chief cause of sickness is said to be magic, and to discover its source the relatives of the sick person seek a medicine-man and from him obtain a verdict by divination. He may discover some object hidden in the thatch or buried near the house which he pronounces to have been the cause. It has, he informs the relatives, been hidden there by some ill-disposed person and the magical spell has to be broken and the object in question destroyed before the sickness will yield to treatment. When once the spell of magic has been broken, the medicine-man finds no difficulty in dealing with the sickness. At times counter-magic has to be used to heal a sick person, because a ghost has seized him. In such cases the medicine-man is supplied with a fowl which he divides into four parts, placing them in four shallow holes made on a plot of waste land. Having thus divided the fowl he goes through a form of incantation in which he commands the ghost to leave the sick person and trouble him no more. He then removes the meat from three of the holes; one piece is taken, cooked, and given to the sick man, a second is taken to the deity of the clan, a third piece the medicine-man himself takes, cooks and eats, while the fourth piece is left in the hole on the waste land for the ghost.

*Transferring sickness.* At other times, it may be, the illness has to be transferred to some other person by means of herbs. The medicine-man chooses his bunch of herbs from an uninhabited part of the country, ties them neatly into a bunch, brushes them over the patient and then carries them to a distant path where, by night, he buries them, covering the spot in such a manner as not to attract attention. The first unsuspecting person who passes contracts the disease and the patient recovers.

*Ghostly possession.* A medicine-man sometimes attributes sickness to ghostly possession, which he says must be cured by propitiating the ghost. He will probably tell the attendants of the sick person that it is the ghost of some relative who has been offended in some way and has therefore sent sickness. Should the person be a rich man, a hut is built as a shrine in honour of the ghost, with a long pole protruding through the centre of the thatch at the apex. The patient gives the medicine-man a goat or an ox to offer to the ghost; the animal is killed near the shrine, the blood is caught in a vessel and put into the shrine with a portion of the meat. The people assemble in numbers to take part in this ceremony. The medicine-man climbs the hut after making the offering of blood, spikes a large piece of meat on the pole and proceeds to cut it into small pieces, which he throws among the crowd, who eagerly scramble for them and eat them. The sickness is supposed to be so widely scattered by this ceremony that it is rendered harmless, and the patient quickly regains his usual health. Any meat that is left the medicine-man takes away with him for his own use.

When a case of sickness proves fatal, the relatives again appeal to the medicine-man to discover who has caused the death that they



may seek the accused person in order to put him to death. When discovered he is tried, but sometimes he may succeed in escaping death by paying a heavy fine.

### DEATH

There can be little doubt that the custom of disposing of the dead by eating the bodies during the days observed for mourning was common to all the Bagesu clans. For various reasons, the custom was kept secret, and even members of the tribe were not permitted to look on during the ceremony, which was performed by night. Yet the custom was known to all, and each family was aware of what was going on, though they never sought to watch their neighbours' doings.

When a man died, the body was kept in the house until the evening, when the relatives who had been summoned gathered for the mourning. In some exceptional instances it took one or two days to bring the relatives together, but as a rule all was ready by the evening of the day of death, and at sunset the body was carried to the nearest waste ground and deposited there. At the same time men of the clan hid themselves in different places round about and, as darkness deepened, they blew upon gourd horns, making a noise like the cry of jackals. The villagers said that the jackals were coming to eat the dead, and young people were warned not to go outside. When darkness had set in and it was felt to be safe to work without intrusion from inquisitive onlookers, a number of elderly women relatives of the dead man went to the place where the body lay and cut it up, carrying back the pieces they wanted to the house of mourning and leaving the remains to be devoured by wild animals.

For the next three, or sometimes four days, the relatives mourned in the house in which the death had taken place, where they cooked and ate the flesh of the dead, destroying the bones by fire and leaving nothing. There was no purification or shaving when this mourning was ended; sometimes an ox was killed for a feast when the heir was announced, but as a rule the people simply returned to their ordinary life without any ceremony. The widows burned their grass girdles and

either went naked or wore the small aprons used by unmarried girls.

The reason they gave for not burying their dead was that, if they allowed the body to decay, the ghost would be detained in the vicinity of the place of death and would, in revenge, cause illness to the children of the family.

### SUICIDE

When a man committed suicide in his house, the house was broken down and burned. If, however, he hanged himself on a tree, even if it was near his house, the body was cast into the grass, the tree was cut down and its roots dug up and burned near the place, but the people went on living in the house. The reason given for the destruction and burning was that the place would influence others to commit the same deed, for the house or tree was considered to convey infection.

If a wife hanged herself in her house, the husband was accused of being the cause. He was despoiled of all his possessions and his house was broken down.

### MANSLAUGHTER

It required much skill and ingenuity for a man to prove that the killing of another was accidental. He might, however, succeed in doing so to the satisfaction of the elders of the clan, and, if both men belonged to the same clan, he was fined, while the relatives of the dead man gave him a pot of beer to show that they were reconciled. The smallest fine imposed for manslaughter was the amount necessary to procure a wife. This was given to the father of the dead man, who was expected to have another son to take the place of the dead.

In some clans the guilty man had to appease the ghost by killing a goat, smearing the contents of its stomach on his chest and throwing the remainder upon the roof of the dead man's house.

If a man thus accidentally killed belonged to another clan, the perpetrator of the deed would be protected by his clan until the case could be tried. If he could prove that it was an



accident, he was fined five cows and probably several goats, sheep, and fowls, while the injured party brought beer as a sign of their acceptance of the terms. Representatives of the two parties met to make an agreement, and an animal, a goat, or sometimes a dog, was brought between them. This animal was cut in two parts, between the fore and hind legs, with one stroke from a heavy knife. The meat was sent to the man who had committed the deed, and in return he sent a live animal, which was killed and eaten on the spot.

### MURDER

When one man murdered another who was his clan brother and probably an inhabitant of the same village, all his goods were taken from him, but his life might be spared.

Murders often resulted from quarrels between men of the same clan but of different villages, for they had irritable dispositions and were quick to attack. The murderer would then flee to some other tribe or clan where he would be safe from pursuit, though he ran the risk of being killed as an intruder before he found a place of refuge. The injured party then lay in wait until they found some member of his family, when they avenged the murder by killing him.

When a man killed someone from another clan, he had to be purified before he could return to his ordinary life. Until this had been done, he had to eat his food with two sticks and never allow any food he put in his mouth to touch his hands. He took two goats, one male for himself, and one female for his wife. The male goat was killed at a distance from the house, and the man was smeared with the contents of its stomach, while the other goat was killed near the house and the contents of its stomach smeared on his wife, the children, and the door-posts, and thrown on the house. The family then feasted on the meat.

### INHERITANCE

The heir to a man's property was usually his eldest son, but the members of his clan might nominate some other member

in his place, simply putting the dead man's son aside, saying, "We are here; you cannot inherit now, nor can you go to your father's widows."

If the eldest son inherited, he generally provided for younger brothers as they grew up, and he kept his sisters until marriage, when he took the marriage fees which were paid for them to help him to get wives for himself and his brothers.

Should there be no child or none old enough to inherit, a brother of the dead man took the property. He looked after the children, gave the sons some of the father's property as they grew up, and arranged the daughters' marriages.

If a son inherited, his mother lived either with or near him. Other widows were generally taken to wife by the heir, but they were at liberty to return to their own homes if their relatives would refund the original marriage fee paid for them. A widow who thus refused the heir was free to re-marry; and her new husband paid the marriage fee to her relatives or, if the original marriage fee had not been returned, to the heir.

Women might never inherit or possess property, though a mother might at times keep the property of her husband for a son who was still a junior.

## CHAPTER VI

### LANGUAGE

Seasons—salutations—relationships—counting

THE divisions of the year among such primitive peoples were arbitrary and variable, depending on the length of the rains. There were two chief divisions, those of the great rains and the smaller rains, and these varied in length from four to six months. During the dry weather between the rains practically no work was done but when, after some weeks of sun and hot dry winds, clouds began to appear, it was known to be time to prepare any new ground for sowing. Later on ground which had been already cleared was dug and made ready. About

eight weeks after harvest the sound of thunder would be heard and the people said "the year has begun." The digging of the fields was then hurriedly finished and after the first shower of rain the seed was sown. During the heavy rains beans and the principal crops were sown, for this season lasted some five to six months. The season of the smaller rains was shorter, lasting sometimes only some four months, so that certain quick-growing crops were sown.

#### NAMES OF THE SEASONS

*Mwaka, munane, sambya*=the great rains; time for sowing millet and beans.

*Luwhira*=the dry season.

*Kimiyu, buhi*=sunshine.

*Mwesi*=a month.

*Mwaka*=the year.

#### SALUTATIONS

*Watulire?*=How are you? The greeting upon meeting. Answer,

*Natulire nili mlahi*=I am quite well.

*Nzia wefwewe*=I am going. Used on leaving. Answer, *Nozia mwuliko*=Go with peace.

#### RELATIONSHIPS

*Father, baba.*

*Mother, mai.*

*Brother, yaiya omulebe wase.*

*Sister, mai wase.*

*Husband, musiza wase.*

*Wife, makasi wase.*

*Son, mwana wase.*

*Daughter, mukana wase muwala wange.*

*Father's father, guga wase.*

*Father's mother, kuku wase.*

*Mother's father, kuku wase.*

*Mother's mother, kuku wase.*

*Father's brother, baba omugyaka.*

*Father's sister, sengawe or sengawase.*

*Mother's brother, mama.*

*Mother's sister, mama.*

*Father's brother's wife, mai.*

*Father's sister's husband, mai.*

*Mother's brother's wife, muko mai or mai.*

*Mother's sister's husband, baba akwali mai.*

*Father's brother's son, yaiya.*

*Father's brother's daughter, mugogo wase.*

*Father's sister's son*, musala wasenge.  
*Father's sister's daughter*, mugogo wasengawe.  
*Mother's sister's son*, masala wase wa mama.  
*Mother's sister's daughter*, mugogo wase wa mama.  
*Son's son*, muzukulu wase.  
*Son's daughter*, muzukulu wase.  
*Daughter's son*, muzukulu wase.  
*Daughter's daughter*, muzukulu wase.  
*Brother's son*, mwana.  
*Brother's daughter*, mwana.  
*Sister's son*, mwiwa mwana.  
*Sister's daughter*, mwiwa mwana.  
*Wife's father*, baba wase.  
*Wife's mother*, muko (mukyienta).  
*Wife's brother*, musani wase.  
*Wife's sister*, musani wase.  
*Wife's sister's husband*, wasagwa wase.  
*Husband's father*, baba muko wase.  
*Husband's mother*, mayi.  
*Husband's brother*, mulamu wase.  
*Husband's sister*, mulamu wase.  
*Husband's brother's wife*, wangoye wase.  
*Son's wife*, muko.  
*Daughter's husband*, mwana.  
*Elder brother*, muganda.  
*Younger brother*, muganda muto.  
*Elder sister*, muganda mugogo wange.  
*Younger sister*, muganda mugogo wange muto.  
*Father's elder brother*, baba.  
*Father's younger brother*, baba muto.

### COUNTING

1. *ndwera*, index-finger stretched out.
2. *zibira*, two fingers stretched out.
3. *ziolatu*, index bent in and others extended.
4. *zine*, four fingers extended.
5. *zitano*, closed fist.
6. *zisesaba*, three fingers on each hand extended.
7. *zitano zibira*, three fingers of one and four of the other extended.
8. *zitano ne ziolatu*, four fingers of each hand extended.
9. *zitano ne zine*, four fingers extended and laid on the closed fist.
10. *zikumi*, both closed fists.

They have no higher number than 10 but they go on to multiply it in various roundabout ways.

## Vocabulary

*All*, byosi  
*arm*, mukono  
*arrow*, luhembo

*Back*, mabega  
*beast*, nsolo  
*believe*, wekiriza  
*bird*, kanyonyi  
*bitter*, mbi (?)  
*black*, kimala  
*blood*, mafugi  
*blue*, nabufu  
*boat*, lenkolo (for beer)  
*body*, mubiri  
*bone*, ugumba  
*born (to be)*, kuzala  
*bow*, buhingo  
*breath*, gumuka  
*bright*, kasamirira  
*burn*, wokire

*Carry*, wetwika  
*chief*, mwami  
*child*, mwana  
*cloud*, enfule  
*club*, mpimbo  
*come*, ija  
*command*, nku  
*cut*, sala

*Dance*, kukina  
*dark*, mahalire  
*day*, gumumu  
*die*, wafa  
*do*, kola  
*dream*, alotira amulotu  
*drink*, kunyue

*Ear*, kutu, matu  
*earth*, ridoha  
*eat*, kulya  
*enemy*, zoneboneko  
*eye*, monye

*False*, bulimba

*fear*, tire  
*few*, bijeke  
*fight*, kulwana  
*fire*, muliro  
*fish*, zingane  
*food*, madote  
*foolish*, musiru  
*foot*, kitandagire  
*forest*, misala  
*friend*, busare

*Ghost*, misambwe  
*go*, kuzi  
*god*, mweri  
*good*, kirabi

*Hair*, ezune  
*hand*, chaba  
*hard*, kihandalafu  
*hate*, lobire  
*head*, mutwe  
*hear*, wawulira  
*heart*, moyo  
*heavy*, kizito  
*high*, ndahi  
*house*, enzu

*I*, nje

*Kill*, mwitire  
*know*, nahulihe

*Large*, kigala  
*leg*, kigere  
*lie*, nogone  
*lightning*, fulatu lutulikire  
*live*, mulamu  
*liver*, amani  
*long*, kihavu  
*loud*, lugale  
*love*, gana  
*low*, nyimpi

*Man*, musindi  
*many*, kingi

*marry*, kuwabintu  
*moon*, mwesi  
*mountain*, lusozi lumya  
*mouth*, mumuwa

*Near*, ligosi  
*new*, kisyaka  
*night*, kiro  
*no*, sinalubiri, ah ah  
*nose*, muru

*Old*, akade

*Past*, kanyuma  
*priest*, mufumu

*Quick*, kuzi

*Rain*, enfula  
*red*, mbisima  
*river*, gamezi  
*run*, dima

*See*, tunula kusirira  
*shadow*, kisigo  
*shield*, ngabo  
*short*, kijeki  
*shoulder*, libega  
*sing*, imba  
*sit*, kalasi  
*skin*, kikoba  
*sky*, lugulu  
*sleep*, kugane  
*slow*, mpola  
*small*, kijake  
*smell*, funye  
*soft*, kidembu  
*sorcerer*, mufumu  
*soul*, mwoyo  
*speak*, alamu  
*spear*, ifumu

*stand*, imamo  
*star*, namwemi  
*stone*, ibare  
*strike*, kuba  
*sun*, gumumu  
*sweet*, kireme

*Take*, hire  
*taste*, komba  
*tell*, gumuganikira  
*that*, ekyo  
*they*, abo  
*thing*, kintu  
*think*, walumire  
*this*, kino  
*thou*, wewe  
*thunder*, nagulu, enfula  
*tongue*, lulimi  
*tooth*, gameno  
*touch*, sawo  
*tree*, kisala  
*true*, bulahi

*Ugly*, mbi

*Walk*, kuze  
*war*, kusolana  
*water*, mezi  
*white*, mwanga  
*who*, nana  
*whole*, kyosi  
*wind*, mbeho  
*wise*, ndahi, bulahi  
*wish*, ngama  
*woman*, mukame  
*word*, luma

*Yellow*, nabufu  
*yes*, eh nihawe wena  
*you*, mwe (plur.)  
*young*, mujake



## CHAPTER VII

THE BAKYIGA CLAN, A SECTION OF THE  
BAGESU OF MOUNT ELGON

Origin of the clan—sub-divisions—religion and customs—marriage—inheritance—relationships

ON the northern slopes of Mount Elgon there lived a clan called the Bakyiga who, though regarded as a section of the Bagesu tribe, held little communication with the other clans. They had a tradition that at one time they lived in Kavirondo and were forced up the mountain slopes by constant raids of tribes from the north and east. They said too that the clan separated and one branch wandered off to the west and were not heard of again. The forefathers of the tribe who first settled on Mount Elgon were Mutula, Ukuyo, Kiyemba, and Benkoko and the present head of the clan is Maguma.

The main clan had several sub-divisions between which there was always enmity, so that it was not even safe for a man to go alone among the members of another sub-division of his own clan. The names of the sub-divisions were:

- |             |                        |           |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Bukyunya | 4. Zuzeni              | 7. Mufuma |
| 2. Kimatya  | 5. Kufula              | 8. Kiribo |
| 3. Kibe     | 6. Nakayode wa Kimatya | 9. Fukula |

4-12-3 (The Fukula branch were not agriculturalists like the rest of the clan, but were hunters and kept cattle which they herded in the plains.)

4-12-4-2-1 (In clothing and in most of the customs and ceremonies they followed the clans of the Bagesu. Their god was *Weri* who could work both good and evil, but ghosts were the responsible agents and to them offerings were made when demanded by the medicine-men. Their huts were of the same type as those of the Bagesu and they followed the same customs during the building.)

4-12-5-1-1 (Slavery was unknown and prisoners taken during war were received into the families of the captors and treated as

members of them, the only difference being that a captive might never inherit property even if there was no son to take possession. In exceptional cases a man might sell a child to a tribesman in order to pay a debt, but such a child was taken into the family and not treated as a slave.

The treatment of sickness and death and their burial ceremonies were identical with those practised in the other Bagesu clans, but they continued to mourn for one month after a death. A murderer if caught was killed, but if he escaped, his division of the clan was plundered and some member of it was killed in his stead.

### MARRIAGE

(The clan followed the rules of exogamy but permitted marriage between members of different sub-divisions.) (Originally the marriage price demanded from a man was one cow but this has increased until now they ask for six cows.)

Men before marriage underwent the initiation rites common to the whole Bagesu tribe and the women made cicatrizations on their bodies so that the keloids were well formed before the time of marriage came. (Originally marriage was always by capture, but this led to such fierce fighting that the clan gave up the practice and settled marriages by negotiation.)

After marriage the bride remained in seclusion ten days. Should the bridegroom have no house of his own, he placed the bride with some friend and after the time of seclusion she went out to dig in her own plot of land while her husband built a hut.)

(Polygamy was common and a man might have as many as four wives, each of whom had to have her own house in his village and her own plot of land.) (Each wife kept the grain she grew in her own granary but she might not sell any without her husband's permission.) (Neglect of this rule often led husbands to beat their wives but wives would stand up for themselves and fight their husbands to get their own way. The wives of one man were usually on friendly terms and one wife would look after the children of another if necessary.)

They had a custom that if a child died and the mother was suffering from swollen breasts, a dog might be put to suck from her.

### INHERITANCE

The eldest son was the legal heir of a man's property but should a man die without a son, his brother inherited. Women were never allowed to possess property, but if a man died leaving a son who was still a child, the boy's mother looked after the property until he was old enough to manage it himself.)

### RELATIONSHIPS

*Father*, lulawefe.  
*Mother*, mawe.  
*Brother*, yayawefe.  
*Sister*, mugogowefe.  
*Husband*, omusezawefe.  
*Wife*, makazozi.  
*Son*, mwana.  
*Daughter*, omukamwana.  
*Father's father*, muzukulu.  
*Father's mother*, muzukulu.  
*Mother's father*, kugawefe.  
*Mother's mother*, guguwefe.  
*Father's brother*, salawefe.  
*Father's sister*, sengewefe.  
*Mother's brother*, mawase.  
*Mother's sister*, kyananyino.  
*Father's brother's wife*, mamafe.  
*Father's sister's husband*, mukwe-wase.  
*Mother's brother's wife*, mukazi-wase.  
*Mother's sister's husband*, lalawefe.  
*Father's brother's son*, yayawefe.  
*Father's brother's daughter*, mugogowefe.  
*Father's sister's son*, muhimwana.  
*Father's sister's daughter*, muhimwana.  
*Mother's brother's son*, kyanyani-no.

*Mother's brother's daughter*, kyananyino.  
*Mother's sister's son*, yayawase.  
*Mother's sister's daughter*, yayawase.  
*Son's son*, muzukulu.  
*Daughter's daughter*, muzukulu.  
*Daughter's son*, muzukulu.  
*Son's daughter*, muzukulu.  
*Brother's son*, mwanawase.  
*Brother's daughter*, mwanawase.  
*Sister's son*, yayawase.  
*Sister's daughter*, yayawase.  
*Wife's father*, tatawase.  
*Wife's mother*, mawase.  
*Wife's brother*, mukowase.  
*Wife's sister*, mulamuwase.  
*Wife's sister's husband*, mukwa-wase.  
*Husband's father*, bapawase.  
*Husband's mother*, mai.  
*Husband's brother*, mulamuwase.  
*Husband's sister*, maiwase.  
*Husband's brother's wife*, wangoye.  
*Son's wife*, mukanawase.  
*Daughter's husband*, mwanawase.  
*Elder brother*, mukulu.  
*Younger brother*, muduwa.  
*Elder sister*, mai mugibola.  
*Younger sister*, mai muduwa.



Woman carrying milk in gourds at Sabei



Waterfall at Sipi, Mount Elgon

# THE BASABEI

## CHAPTER VIII

### GENERAL

The Basabei, a semi-pastoral tribe—origin of the tribe—clans—government—chiefs of the clans—head-men of the villages—murder—clothing and ornaments—scarifications—food—carrying loads—fires

ON the north and north-eastern slopes of Mount Elgon there is to be found a semi-pastoral tribe, divided into two sections, the Basabei and the Bambei. Though not so fine either in feature or physique as the pastoral people of Ankole, they resembled the Negro-Hamitic tribes of the Lake Region in appearance, but differed from them entirely in their mode of life. They might have come from the same stock, but in that case they must have entered the country during another, possibly a later, migration. Much in their general behaviour, however, seemed to connect them with the pastoral groups of the north-east, the Masai, the Nandi, the Wahumba of the Usagara Hills, and the Wakikuyu, rather than with those of the south-west. They practised initiation ceremonies which included circumcision, while the Baganda and Banyankole avoided all mutilations and the Bakitara confined themselves to the extraction of certain of their teeth. Both men and women of the Basabei had to undergo initiation ceremonies before they were recognised as full members of the clan; until these rites were performed they might not enter into the councils of the adults, nor might they marry. Their use of milk and their methods of building also differed from those of the Baganda, Bakitara, and Banyankole.

The people said that they first lived in Sengweri, on the plains to the east of the mountain, and were forced by the constant raids of the Masai upon their cattle to betake them-



selves to the hills. It seems possible that they were the most north-westerly representatives of the same race as the Masai; they might indeed have been a branch which, having cut itself adrift from one of the larger tribes, was forced to move up the mountain for safety. The Suk, Turkana, and Karamojo tribes might also belong to the Galla, but as I was unable to reach them I cannot judge with any certainty. The remains of the Galla have been swept further north and absorbed by the Abyssinians and the border tribes of that country.

The mountain homes not being favourable for the breeding of large herds of cattle, the people took to agricultural pursuits; and, as generations passed, milk fell into a secondary place in their diet and vegetables became the staple food. Their huts were similar in style to those of the Wagogo and other belligerent tribes of East Africa, that is, they had flat roofs which were made of mud, not of thatch, and which therefore protected the huts against incendiarism by night-raiders who might try by such means to drive out the occupants in order to attack and slay them in the open. The milk vessels too, like those of the Masai, were chiefly gourds, while the clothing, the ornaments, and even the method by which the women carried loads, were like those of the Masai and Nandi. Both men and women were tall with finely cut features and no spare flesh; their voices were high-pitched and their conversation sounded short and abrupt.

The Basabei said that at first their tribe was composed of three clans:

1. *Gibisisi*, who avoided dogs (*embwa*);
2. *Goboro*, who avoided a kind of mushroom (*butiko*);
3. *Kyemwehe*, who avoided all kinds of vegetables.

The founders of these clans were said to have come into the country with a cow and a calf and a bride called Yaboro.

The tribe has now two main divisions, Basabei and Bambei, and the clans are numerous, though the tribe is numerically small, not amounting to more than several hundreds. Each clan has its own totem, which was, however, known only to a few of the principal members, who could not be induced to

divulge it. The clans were all exogamous, and, with the exception of a few dwellers near rivers, none of them would eat fish.

### BASABEI CLANS. PATERNAL DESCENT

Kaboroha	Kamelogot	Kabukya
Mandani	Kabusuriti	Kasongeni
Kamehi	Kabukyabikweni	Kabukyebai
Kasuleri	Kamaseki	Tobani
Kabukeriwo	Kabukweti	Abuheri
Kabukyemori	Kabogi	Atamuto
Kabekyebukutwa	Kabukyemehi	Kyakyebasu
Kabisi	Kabugyorwa	Abukyesiri
Abusyosya	Kabuyesukwa	Kabukyelemeti
Kabukyemiro	Kabungora	Kabunga
Abikibingoye	Kabukyemeseki	Kabungarha
Akwasanhi	Kabusabugi (totem, monkey)	
Kamundi	Kaburob	Kaputen
Kamuhoyi	Kaburini	Kabilelo
Kapekumuro	Kabukerege	Kabukerotiki
Kabukyeburoni	Kabukyetoromu	Kabukyemeri
Kabukyemeyo	Kabukyemu	Kabukyebukyui
Kabukyebuteri	Kabukyereteregeyi	Kamaruyu
Kamyeronyi	Kabutigori	Kabutomamu
Kamitwa	Kabusogahi	Kabyemeti
Kamarange	Kamalemet	Kabukyemes
Kabuyes	Kabisigoha	Kametwa
Kabusuwi	Kabufubiti	Kamatwi
Kabukorot	Kabuhyerobi (rhinocerus or donkey)	

### CLANS OF THE BAMBEI. PATERNAL DESCENT

Bagweri (chief)	Bometi	Kabusesi
Kabikwakoi	Kamoko	Kaputuyi
Kapujogeni	Kabukekya	Kamunatiri
Kabunaronge	Kabusamasama	Kabusirikwa
Kamenwa	Kapuchawiloti	Kaputoki
Kabeti	Kabuchai	Kabukerani
Kamujaki	Kabusomini	Kabukyekosomi
Kama	Kabuseroti	Kabuchesongoli
Kabunyai	Kasumbata	Kabukamai
Kabukyemuroi	Kabuchoiki	Kamere
Kabukyerobi	Kabukweki	Kabubyekyoko
Kabukyasaga	Kabukuti	Kabukyebereni
Kabis	Kabit	Kaboro
Kabukyabasa	Kabukarimenkat	Karema
Kamulyingama	Kamunangori	Kamuranyemi

Kalimet	Kabukyekwek	Kabukyorokwa
Kabwari	Kabuna	Kamagina
Kabukendui	Kamilil	Kaputo
Kamuriyoni	Kabukyaleli	

## GOVERNMENT

The members of each clan lived on their own particular part of the mountain, and had their own head-man who was responsible for all affairs concerning the clan and its relations with other clans. He claimed no rights as ruler over the clan, for he was its Father, and not its king. His power was greatest in connection with the land, and it was to him that all disputes concerning the boundaries of cultivated plots or of clan land were brought. These, however, were not frequent, for unclaimed land was so plentiful that quarrels on this account were few. There was seldom a case of theft to be tried, for theft among themselves was, so far as I could discover, practically unknown. They took any opportunity of stealing, or, as they called it, "snatching away" animals belonging to any other tribe, but this was regarded as an act deserving of praise and not of punishment. The Father of the clan demanded no payment of taxes or rents, but he expected to receive a pot of beer each year after the harvest was over.

The villages varied in size, some containing as many as forty houses and others as few as four. They were situated on the sides of the mountain wherever an even place gave room for their houses and fields, places with an area of about one square mile being generally chosen. Countless cascades fell down the mountain sides and ran over such level places as clear streams, which supplied the people with water. The trees on the banks of these streams were often of gigantic size; and vegetation of all kinds, from the tropical growths of the lower slopes to the plants and flowers of temperate zones on the cooler heights, flourished luxuriantly.

In each village there was one man who was looked upon as the head, often because of the site he occupied. To him the members of the village brought their difficulties and disputes, and all ordinary cases he settled himself. If, however, anyone

refused to accept his decision or if a case concerned any person outside his own village, he would appeal to the Father of the clan. A man who refused to accept the decision of the head of the village and was judged in the wrong by the Father of the clan, was flogged, or, if he was an old man, was fined a cow, which was killed and eaten by members of the clan.

### MURDER

When two members of the same clan quarrelled and fought and one killed the other, no compensation was claimed by the parents of the dead man but, if he was married, the parents of his wife claimed a cow and a sheep.

Should a murderer and his victim be of different clans, the clan of the murdered man would demand compensation. The murderer brought to an appointed place ten cows, two bulls, and two sheep, and members of both clans met there. One bull and one sheep were killed for the men and the same for the women, and the clans ate a meal together and were smeared with the contents of the stomachs and some of the blood of the animals. The spear, shield, and knife of the murdered man were brought and given to his brother, who also took the skin of one bull and one sheep, while the brother of the murdered man's wife took the rest. The fine was intentionally heavy in order that it might act as a deterrent and the man was often financially crippled for years before he could pay it off.

For one man to curse another in the name of the rainbow was a serious offence, and the man thus cursed was justified in spearing the other to death. He was, however, tried for the murder and might be fined as much as five cows.

### CLOTHING

In spite of the fact that many of these people lived at great heights on the mountains, where the cold was often extreme, they wore practically nothing in the way of clothing; and though they took shelter in the warmth of their huts when the sun went down, they never allowed cold to interfere with

their ordinary out-of-door tasks. Boys when small might go naked, or they might wear a skin slung from one shoulder and long enough to reach the hips, which was also the only dress of a full-grown man. The skin was that of a goat or calf; two corners were fastened together and the robe put over the head and under the left arm so that the fastened corners were on the right shoulder and the robe was open down the right side.

A girl before she was of an age for marriage wore only a small apron four inches by six. This was often merely a fringe of grass twisted into strings, but sometimes seeds or the ends of bottle gourds were pierced and threaded on the strings. After a girl had reached marriageable age and had been initiated, she wore a robe over her shoulders and one round her waist hanging to her knees. The shoulder robe was usually a cow-skin; two corners were fastened together and it was slipped over her head, hanging over her shoulders to her waist with the opening in front, so that she could have her arms free or wrap the robe round her as she wished. The other robe was generally made of two or three goat-skins sewed together and hung from the waist to the knees.

The ornaments worn by women were iron bracelets and anklets, and on the latter were generally strung numbers of iron rings like large washers. They did not pierce their lips, but wooden discs were inserted in the lobes of the ears and bits of straw stuck through the helix.

Men also wore bracelets, often ivory rings, above the elbow and above the biceps, while round their necks they wore iron rings. The lobes of their ears were pierced for large discs and small rings were put through holes pierced in the cartilage of the helix.

Women made keloids on the sides of the body, running in lines from above the ribs down to the stomach; but they had no other markings. The men only made these keloids on the body when they had killed some enemy in battle, for they were regarded as a mark of courage. Boys sometimes made keloids on their shoulders.



## FOOD

Milk, which was at one time regarded as an essential article of diet, gradually became less used, until it was looked upon by adults more as a luxury than a necessity, though mothers still declared it essential for the children. It was drunk fresh and whenever possible was mixed with blood, either of cows or of wild animals killed in the hunt.

The chief food of the people was millet, which was ground between stones and made into a thick porridge. Sweet potatoes were boiled and eaten whole, as were also plantains, though the latter might be baked in the embers of the fire. Maize when young was roasted in the cob, but when it had been left to ripen fully it was first boiled and then roasted. Various kinds of dwarf beans were grown; these were seldom used fresh but were removed from the husks, dried, and stored until required, when they were soaked for some hours and boiled until soft. Numbers of wild plants were also used as vegetables.

They ate all kinds of animals except lions, leopards, dogs, and hyaenas. The blood of the animals killed was caught in vessels, cooked, and eaten.

Salt they obtained from various trees, which were burned and the ashes washed with water. The water was then filtered off and evaporated over slow fires.

The people had two meals daily, one in the morning and one in the evening. In fine weather they ate their meals outside, but, if it was wet, in the hut. The husband, wife, and family ate out of one pot, sitting in a circle round it.

## FIRES

The only fuel used for fires, both for warming the houses and for cooking, was wood, which was plentiful on the mountain. The women went out to gather it and bring it home. Men sometimes performed such tasks as building huts and digging in the fields, but most of the manual labour was carried on by the women. Men when carrying loads put them on their heads, but women preferred to bear them on their



backs. They made up great bundles of fire-wood, binding them with thongs of cow-skin of which a loop formed a sling for carrying the load. The woman sat on the ground with her back to her load and passed the thong over her head, placing it round her forehead. Then, rising, she walked in a stooping attitude with the weight of the load resting on her back and supported by the strap. All kinds of loads, even food and water-pots, were carried in this way by the women.

The fires in the huts were practically never allowed to die out, but if one did so and there was no other fire near from which some might be brought, fire-sticks were used, and every house kept these in readiness for emergency. The sticks were called *tembererwa*, the hard wood stick which was used to bore into the other being known as the male, while the soft stick was the female. The point of the hard stick was bored into the soft wood by twirling it rapidly between the hands until the dust from the soft wood was ignited, when the flame was blown into tow which readily took fire. So far as could be learned, fire had no sacredness and there were no taboos connected with it.

## CHAPTER IX

### RELIGION

The creator—ghosts—names of children—offerings to ghosts—  
magic—rain-making

THE Creator was *Oiki*, and prayers and offerings were made to him, especially in cases of illness. He had many shrines in the country, and when anyone was ill, a few old people, men or women according to the sex of the patient, went to a shrine with a pot of beer or, if they could not get that, a pot of milk instead. They stirred the beer, saying, "This is for you, spare so-and-so, let him get well." In addition to the beer a goat or a fowl might be offered and killed at the shrine, and cows were often presented to the god and kept alive. An animal



Men and women of Sabei carrying loads



which belonged to the god might not be killed and eaten except by a gathering of the whole clan, and another animal had always to be dedicated in its place.

The most important supernatural beings were, however, the ghosts, that is, the spirits of the dead. These ghosts had a special place of abode, but the people had no idea of its whereabouts. The ghosts spent most of their time in the vicinity of their old haunts, exerting their influence for good or ill upon the living. Dreams were regarded as conversations with the ghosts, who took this means of warning and advising their living relatives. Illness might be caused by a ghost who desired a gift of a sheep, a goat, or a cow.

The name given to a child in its infancy was that of some departed member of the clan, and it was given at the instigation of the ghost, which remained with the child and took charge of it. Though the ghost used its influence generally for good it might also punish the child for any failure in clan duties or observances. It would resist any attempt on the part of another ghost to influence the child, telling the other to wait for another child to be born and take charge of it. A child was always given a new name at initiation, and in this case the name was that of the father if he was dead, or of some member of the clan recently deceased. This was the name afterwards used, and the name given at birth was merely retained for identification purposes.

When a man brewed beer, he always poured a little out for the ghosts of his father and grandfather, for if this attention was neglected, they would be offended and bring illness into the family. People also offered cows to the ghosts of their ancestors, and kept them alive. There was a recent case where a man, pressed by hunger, sold first one and then the other of two cows which he had given to the ghost of his father. The ghost came to him and, seizing him by the throat until it nearly choked him, demanded why he had parted with the cows without first obtaining its permission. The man promised to supply the ghost with others and, being released on this understanding, obtained two new cows as soon as possible.

A person who was accused of using magic was tested by the poison ordeal. He was given certain drugs to drink, and if he became intoxicated under their influence, he was judged guilty and was killed by being struck with a club on the neck so that it was broken. Old people were often accused of being the cause of a death, and if on being tried they were judged guilty, they were killed by having the neck broken with a blow from a club.

#### RAIN-MAKING

The rain-maker, though well known and feared, did not practise his art in public. When rain was wanted, the people took a goat and several pots of beer and went to the rain-maker's village in the evening. When they arrived, they presented their offering and made their request. They remained in the village for a night, during which the rain-maker made his incantations in secret; and in the morning he told them that they might expect rain after a certain number of days.

The people went away, but, should the rain not come at the promised time, they appealed to him again and he gave them pots of beer which he had blessed and told them to go to a certain place and pour the beer into a particular river. The beer had always to be thrown into a calm pool and not into a part where the stream flowed rapidly.

## CHAPTER X

### OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE

The cattle—breeding—milk-vessels—use of milk—sheep and goats—agriculture—brewing—tobacco—building—flat-roofed and bee-hive huts—pottery—iron-work—hunting small game, buffalo, and elephants—fishing—warfare—scarifications of a warrior—dancing

#### THE CATTLE

THE cows bred by these mountain people were of a small type and inferior to those of the plains; but they were possibly more hardy and better adapted to the colder climate and

rougher conditions, requiring less care and attention. During the rainy season they were pastured on the hills and brought back to the villages by night; but when the grass on the hills was dried up by the sun, it was burned off and the cows were taken down to the lower plains, where the grass had been burnt off earlier in the year and was growing again. They were not brought back from the plains to the villages by night, but were gathered together into small zarebas or, during heavy rains, into caves, which are numerous on this side of the mountain. The herdsmen also did not return home but remained with the cattle to herd and guard them, while the women came daily from the villages with large gourds to carry home milk for their families.

As in Kitara, one fully-grown bull was considered sufficient to serve a herd of one hundred cows, and two young bulls were also kept in the herd. Care was always taken that a bull did not serve its own calf, and a heifer was usually sent away from the herd in which it was born, to one in some other place to mitigate the risk of in-breeding. A cow might have as many as ten calves before it was considered too old to bear.

The men took the cows out to pasture, but the women cleaned the kraal and milked the cows when they returned at night. The milk-vessels were gourds, those in common use varying in size from small gourds which held about a pint to large vessels holding a quart, while some large bottle-gourds held as much as two gallons. Leather straps were attached for carrying the gourds, and after use the vessels were washed out with water and grit of pounded stone, and hung up to dry. When dry, they were fumigated with burning reeds or elephant grass, after which some of the ash was dropped into them, stirred round with a stick and shaken out, any that remained inside being allowed to mix with the milk.

Milk was usually drunk fresh, though clotted milk was also largely used. Little milk was kept for butter, for the people did not eat it and only used it in small quantities for rubbing on their bodies. The dung from the cows was used for smearing



the floors of the houses to give them a smooth surface, but it was never used for fuel.

When a cow calved, a boy, or, should there be no boy in the family, a girl was chosen to drink the milk until the calf was able to go out and eat grass, which would be when it was about two weeks old. During this time the boy might not drink milk from other cows, and had also to abstain from all animal and vegetable food. When the calf began to eat grass, the father of the family alone drank the milk from the milking of that day, after which it became common and anyone might drink it.

It was customary for parents to prepare for the initiation of sons or daughters by setting aside milk for them some years before the event. This was usually taken from a cow which had just had a calf, so that the milk was discoloured with blood, or a cow might be bled and the blood mixed with milk, which was then put in a large pot and placed in a cave or hung in a tree. It might be kept four or five years, and it set firm like a large cake, which was eaten by the boy or girl when the initiation ceremony took place.

Sheep and goats were kept in fairly large numbers. They were herded during the day by children, both boys and girls, who gathered together from their various homes and played while they watched the herds. In the early evening they returned to the village, and the kids and lambs, which had been shut up in huts during the day, were turned out and allowed to feed before all the animals were taken in for the night.

Fowls were kept in the houses by most wives, and a few dogs were kept for hunting purposes.

#### AGRICULTURE

When new land was being brought under cultivation, the men did the clearing; but they never used the hoe, and the preparation of the ground for sowing was left to the women. When her husband had cut down the trees, scrub, and grass, the woman burned them on the ground, which was the only fertilising the soil ever got. When land was worn out and



Sabei granaries



yielded poor crops it was left to lie fallow for two or three years, and the owner either broke up new ground or returned to a field which had been out of use for some time. There was no method known of fertilising such land, nature being left to restore it when it ceased to yield good crops.

They followed a certain rotation of crops, for millet was seldom grown on the same ground for two successive seasons. Other grains or potatoes were planted in the place where millet had been grown in the previous year.

While the millet was ripening, children were sent to keep off the birds; and when it was ripe, husband and wife worked together at the harvest, gathering in the grain and bringing it back to the village for threshing. From the outset of harvest until it was all garnered, the woman might not wash any part of her body except her hands. When the threshing was finished and the grain was ready to be ground, the husband had to eat the first cooked meal of the new crop; then his family might eat, and after that anyone might partake.

As much grain as they thought to be necessary to keep the family in food until the next harvest season was stored away in granaries adjoining the house, and all that could be spared was set apart for making into beer.

### BREWING

When the harvest was over, brewing began, an occasion which was greeted with joy by young and old, for it heralded the season of festivity. Some families had only sufficient grain for one brewing, whilst others might have enough for two or three.

First the grain was thoroughly dried in the sun; then some of it was taken and ground to flour and again dried in the sun for two days. The flour was gently baked in an earthen pot, being stirred the whole time until it was coloured a uniform brown, after which it was again exposed to the sun's rays to get rid of any moisture. Another supply of the grain was then taken, put into large pots, covered with water, and left until it sprouted, when it was drained and dried in the sun until

hard enough to grind into coarse meal. This was mixed with the baked flour and the whole put into large pots. Cold water was added and the mixture left to stand a few hours, after which large quantities of boiling water were poured into it and it was allowed to cool. This beer was intoxicating; it was never freed from malt, and was drunk from gourd cups and never filtered or drunk through tubes.

### TOBACCO

Men smoked tobacco freely and sometimes chewed it; nearly all women smoked it when past middle age, but rarely chewed it; and young women seldom used it at all. It was also largely employed for barter with outside tribes in return for spears, hoes, and goats.

The tobacco was grown near the houses on the refuse-heaps, which were fertilised by the ashes from the wood fires and the sheep and goat droppings from the houses. When it was considered ready, the leaves were gathered, the mid-ribs cut out, and the leaves dried and pounded between stones. The pulped leaves were again spread out and dried in the sun before being stored in earthen pots ready for use.

### BUILDING

When a man was going to build he had only one taboo which had to be observed—if the fire in the house where he lodged died out during the night he would not go to work that day.

The type of hut formerly used by the tribe, which was built so that it could not easily be destroyed by enemies, fell, of recent years, into disuse, and the beehive-shape was adopted. The beehive hut with the grass roof was more easily and quickly built, requiring less labour and less timber than the old style; and therefore, when there was no longer the same danger of sudden raids, the people adopted it.

The old style of hut was oblong and flat-roofed, the walls being formed of poles some five feet long and not less than four inches in diameter, planted closely side by side in the ground and bound together. Posts were sometimes also

planted inside the walls to carry stouter beams and help to support the roof. For the roof, poles some eight feet long and about the same thickness as those forming the walls were laid across from wall to wall projecting fully a foot beyond the walls to protect them from rain; then another layer of lighter timber was laid at right angles and bound to the first layer. The interstices were filled up with coarse grass, and a layer of damp earth about four inches deep was spread on the top and beaten hard. This earth was a little thicker in the centre than at the sides so that rain ran down and off the sides of the hut. A layer of mud was also plastered on the walls both inside and out and smoothed with the palm of the hand.

Only a few poles were required for building a beehive hut. The building was begun from the top, the apex being a few reeds bound to a small circle of grass some twelve inches in diameter. The workers built downwards from this, increasing their circle and raising the apex until the height and diameter required were attained. This basket-work roof was then raised on to its poles and thatched with grass. The only opening was the door-way, through which light entered and the smoke of the fire escaped.

No beds or stools were necessary, for the family slept on the floor with their feet towards the fire. A space was divided off for the goats and sheep, which were tied by the foot to pegs driven into the earthen floor. Calves were tied by the neck to the walls in the same part of the hut, while the cows went through it to another division, where they were left loose and not tied.

#### POTTERY

Pots were made either by men or by women, but they only made those which were used for cooking; water-pots were bought from other tribes, and milk-vessels were usually gourds. Their method of making the pots was the same as that of the neighbouring tribes—that is, they made the bottom and built up the sides with coils of clay laid on spirally and smoothed outside and inside with scraps of gourd shell. The pots were then baked in grass fires.



There were no special taboos observed in the making of the pots; but they preferred to bake them between new and full moon and not while the moon was waning.

#### IRON-WORKING

There were no smelters among them, for they bought their iron from other tribes ready smelted and prepared for use. The smiths of the Basabei made rough arrow-heads for use in hunting and war; but their chief work was the crude iron bracelets, anklets, and rings for fingers and toes which all the people wore. Hoes and spears the people bought from outside tribes, for none of the smiths were capable of making these. Knives they bought from outside smiths; but they also made some for themselves from rib bones of goats and sheep, which they scraped and rubbed down with stones to a sharp edge.

#### HUNTING

There were no professional hunters; but when anyone, feeling a desire for meat, proposed a hunt, a large number could always be got to join. They had to betake themselves to the lower slopes of the mountain to find game, for only isolated animals found their way to the higher plateaux and valleys.

When the game was such as antelope, zebra, or gazelle, a large number of people, armed with spears and clubs, formed a solid wall towards which a few others drove the game. There was generally no rule for dividing the meat, but when an animal was killed every one rushed upon it and tried to seize some of the flesh. Those who succeeded in getting meat would depart home, while the rest would go on hunting until they were successful or gave up the chase in exhaustion.

When the game being hunted was buffalo, three or four men placed themselves in hiding beside a path or in trees in positions from which they could spear the animals. Others surrounded the buffaloes and drove them along past the concealed hunters, who threw their poisoned spears at them.

The poison used was a very virulent one, and they stated that a wounded animal rarely managed to go more than a few

hundred yards before it died. The poison was extracted from the tree *kyetit*, the bark being specially valuable, though the roots and branches also contained it. The parts were pounded to pulp and boiled until the water became thick, when it was rubbed on the spears and arrows. These were used for hunting big game and in war. Poisoned spears were attached by ropes to trees or to logs, so that if an animal rushed away after being struck, the spear was dragged out of the wound and was not lost, even if the quarry escaped into hiding.

When a buffalo was killed, it was flayed and the skin divided into two equal parts and taken to the fathers of the two men who struck the first and second spears into the animal. These old men made shields for their sons from the hide. The father of the man who first speared the buffalo was also given a leg as his share of the meat, the leader of the hunt was given the right shoulder, and the rest was divided among the others who took part. The head was eaten on the spot, the man who first speared the animal taking the tongue, while the wielders of the second and third spears took the remainder.

Should a herd of elephants be seen in the neighbourhood and a hunt be organised, a deputation was first sent to the house of a medicine-man. On reaching the house they elected one elder to go in and consult the medicine-man, who took auguries and gave advice as to the conduct of the hunt. When all was ready three men were chosen to secrete themselves in trees with poisoned spears, while the others, advancing openly upon the animals, drove them towards the place of concealment. The men in hiding speared them as they passed under the trees; usually one at least was hit and either brought down at once or died shortly afterwards from the poison. The tusks belonged to the man who first speared the animal, but one was given to the medicine-man who gave his blessing to the hunters. A shoulder was given to the chief huntsman, and the rest divided up on the spot amongst the hunters or carried back to the village and divided there. In former times little value was set upon the ivory, for which they had little use, though they were fond of ornaments made of it. More

recently, however, they found a market for it and bartered it for calico, brass and iron wire, and beads.

Those members of the tribe who lived on the lower slopes of the mountain, near the rivers which feed Lake Salisbury, hunted the hippopotamus and ate its flesh. They seldom, however, went out for the express purpose of hunting; and it was only when a hippopotamus attacked a man that he speared it and called his companions to his assistance in killing the animal.

There were members of the tribe living near Lake Salisbury who gave some time to fishing and who ate certain kinds of fish, but this was not regarded as a regular part of the diet, and few people ate it at all. In shallow pools fish were caught by the hand or in baskets, and some men used rod and line with bent iron hooks, or spears. Mud-fish and crocodiles were speared but never eaten.

#### WARFARE

The Basabei were not a warlike people. When their country was invaded, they preferred to retreat into the safe places of the mountains rather than to make a stand. Though at times they might combine to defend themselves against a common foe, they were as a rule too disunited to make any resistance. They sometimes made raids on the cattle of the Karamojo when the herds were sent with insufficient guards to pasture on the plains near the mountains; and the Karamojo would seek to capture the Basabei herds when they had to come down to the lower valleys owing to the scarcity of grass on the higher mountain slopes.

The Basabei came to the attack armed with spears, shields, bows and arrows, and heavy clubs. Should they find the cows well guarded, they might attack the Karamojo herdsmen, and, as the latter used only spears and small shields, the poisoned arrows were an effective weapon.

If one of the enemy had been killed, the warriors on their return were all isolated from the other members of the village. They lived in a hut outside the village and for five days might not touch any food with their fingers, but used sticks to convey it to their mouths. The father of the warrior who had

done the deed gave them a goat which they killed and ate. Strips of the skin were put on the right wrist and the ankles of the slayer and some of the contents of the stomach were smeared on him.

On the sixth day a medicine-man came, and, mixing various herbs in a pot of water, he washed the slayer and removed the skins from his wrist and ankles, throwing them into an isolated plot of land, where they were not likely to be found and people would not be contaminated by them. An old man, the father or clan-father of the warrior, came, bringing a pot of milk mixed with blood; he puffed some of this from his mouth over his son, and going to his house puffed some on the door-posts and, entering, puffed some over the house inside. After this the warrior came to the door, where an elderly woman met him and, taking his spear and shield from him, put them in their proper place in the house before he might enter. This ceremony prevented the ghost from following him into his house and doing him harm. All the warriors were then free to return home and resume their normal life.

A warrior who had killed a man was entitled to make keloids on one side of his chest; and when he had killed a second he might make them on the other side as well. These were marks of honour and were much envied by the man's companions.

#### DANCING

Among the Basabei, as in most African tribes, dancing was one of the great pleasures of life, and they indulged in it whenever a season of festivity gave an occasion for doing so. The chief festival seasons were marriage celebrations and the rejoicings after harvest, when beer was plentiful and the people gave themselves up to drinking and dancing.

The dancers arranged themselves in two lines, the men on one side and the women on the other, with a space of some twenty to forty feet between them. A woman had a small drum which she tapped with a stick held in one hand, silencing the vibration with her other hand when necessary, and chanting in a high monotone, while the crowd supplied

a chorus on two notes without words, simply singing oh and eh. The result was a noise which resembled a cry of pain as much as one of joy.

While the music and song went on, dancers stepped out from the lines and hopped up and down with one leg extended in front. The men and women kept to their own sides and hopped along the lines at a rapid pace. The excitement among the onlookers grew and they all began to jump in the air, keeping the legs straight and stiff and springing from the toes. This went on for about ten or fifteen minutes and was brought to an abrupt termination by a shout of "Ah!" There was a pause of a few minutes and then the drums and songs began again and the same performance was gone through with fresh dancers in the centre.

Everyone joined in this dancing, from children who could just toddle to old folk who were too feeble to move about, but who took their parts in the songs and waved their bodies and arms to the rhythm.

The time for universal dancing was after harvest, when the new moon appeared; then the rejoicings went on night after night and the young people would travel many miles to take part. It was during these dances that young men and women met and arranged their marriages.

## CHAPTER XI

### BIRTH, INITIATION, MARRIAGE, ILLNESS AND DEATH

Sterile wives—adoption—birth—seclusion—birth of twins—bringing-out of twins—death of twins—dentition—initiation of boys—admission to clan-membership—initiation and admission of girls—arranging marriages—the marriage-feast—taboo on meat for a bride—fornication—treatment of illness—death—inheritance—suicide—death of women

#### BIRTH

As among other African tribes, a man was not looked upon as worthy of the name nor was a woman regarded as worthy of respect until they became parents, especially of a son. Should



a number of months pass after marriage and the wife show no sign of conceiving, the husband would try various medicines and different kinds of magical devices. Sometimes he summoned a medicine-man who would try by augury or by ordeal to discover which of them was at fault and would direct the treatment to be adopted; for sterility was seldom ascribed to physical impotence, but to the action of some ghost which one of the parties had offended. A husband rarely sent a sterile wife away; but, if she believed that the fault lay with her husband, she might go of her own accord and marry another man. In such a case, the husband reclaimed the marriage-fee which he had paid to her parents.

A man sometimes adopted a son of a clan brother when he saw that he might not hope to have a son of his own. There was no ceremony of adoption: the child simply went to live with its new parents and was accepted as their son and heir. Slaves were unknown, and when any children were captured in raids they were admitted to the family and treated as sons and daughters. When they grew to marriageable age a wife would be found for a boy and the marriage-fee might be paid for him by the foster parents, and a marriage-fee would be demanded by them for a girl.

The only taboo which had to be observed by a pregnant woman was that she might not eat the meat of any animal that had died or been killed by a wild beast or in the hunt.

When the time of birth came, several women might be in the house, but two of them were in charge, one being the husband's mother. When the child was born, the mother-in-law tied the umbilical cord and cut it with a knife, usually when the after-birth had come away. The child was handed to the assistant midwife, who washed it and started respiration, while the chief midwife attended to the mother. The after-birth was taken out and buried in the cow-dung heap or, if they had no cows, in the place where the heap would have been. The child was named immediately after birth by the husband's mother and other women of his clan, and it was given the name of some deceased member of the clan. For seven days after the birth the husband kept out of the



house and no other man was allowed to come in. Nothing was taken from the house during this time; and the fire was specially guarded, for it might neither die out nor might any outside person use any of it.

During her time of seclusion the woman wore only a waist-band and she was never washed. After seven days the medicine-man brought purificatory medicines for her. She was then taken out and washed, and the house was swept and the floor smeared with cow-dung. When the stump of the navel cord fell from the child it was buried near the wall of the house in a place where dogs or rats were not likely to find it and eat it.

On the eighth day the husband might come in and see his wife and child, but he might not come to her bed for four months. Should he have other wives, he had no sexual relations with her for a year after the birth. At the end of four months, relatives and friends came to see the child, and should the husband have had sexual intercourse with his wife before that time, he was vigorously abused.

The women were prolific, and when a man had one or at most two wives, it was quite common for each wife to bear ten children, while some were said to have as many as fifteen. As a rule, however, few of the children of these large families lived to grow up, and many died in infancy. Bronchitis seems to have been a common cause of infant mortality, for the mornings and evenings on the mountain were cold, and the children, who wore no clothes, suffered.

### TWINS

When a midwife who was attending a woman in confinement, saw that there were twins, no one else might speak in the room until both were born. A medicine-man was then summoned and a woman who had had twins was sent for to cut the cord. The after-births were buried in the path by which the cows came into the kraal.

The mother and children lived in one part of the house and the husband in another, the rooms being separated so that

husband and wife did not see each other. Neither was expected to go out during the day for four months; if for any reason the mother had to leave the house, she had to be careful not to cross a stream. The medicine-man gave the mother medicine, and no woman but the midwife was allowed to see her.

At the end of four months the father of the twins killed a female goat that was with kid. The unborn kid was skinned and the father wore a bit of the skin and the caul as a cap, while the body of the kid was put in a hole near the place where the after-births of the twins were buried. This hole was not filled up at once, but the husband and wife stood on either side of it, while the woman who had previously had twins and who had cut the navel cords stood beside the place where the after-births were buried. This woman had two pieces of iron which she clanged together to start the dance.

The brother of the husband, bearing a spear and a shield, and the brother of the wife, carrying a basket of grain, climbed on to the roof of the house in which the twins were born, and were given the irons, which they beat to keep the dance going. Beer was drunk freely by the people, who assembled in large numbers and danced and rejoiced all day.

On the next day, the husband took a pot of beer and sprinkled it on the land in all directions; and on the third day the wife came out with the children and, taking a pot of beer, sprinkled the land and the cattle. The brush end of a cow's tail was used to sprinkle with, and she had to be careful to direct some of the beer towards the rivers and the herds, for the rivers would dry up and the cattle cast their calves if she omitted them.

Should one or both of the twins die during the period of seclusion, they were buried under the eaves at the entrance to the house; and when another child was born and was six or seven years old, the bodies were exhumed and taken to a cave, where they were laid in a dry place. When the party returned from the cave beer was drunk and dancing and

feasting took place. If the father was a rich man, he killed a bull, while a poor man would kill a goat that the relatives might feast and rejoice together. If one twin died, the one that survived was called *Kisa* (a blessing).

The cutting of a child's first teeth was watched with great anxiety, for if the upper teeth came first they brought evil with them. Should this happen to a boy, it was said that the father would die; and if to a girl, the mother would die. The parents and grandparents sat round while a goat was killed and offered to the god *Oiki*. The contents of the stomach were smeared over the parents and beer was blown or sprinkled over all the party, including the child. A medicine-man then broke out the offending teeth and thus saved the life of the parent.

When a child cast its first teeth, it was told to throw them up towards the sky, saying, "Give me new and better teeth." At puberty the two lower incisors were extracted and thrown on the roof of the house. At about the age of ten or twelve boys and girls pierced the lobes and the helix of the ears.

### INITIATION

When boys attained the age of about fourteen, they were expected to come forward for the rite of initiation, which took place about every seventh year. They kept no record of age, and judged by the appearance of a boy when he was old enough to be reckoned among the adult members of the clan. The boys themselves were usually anxious to be considered men, and came forward to undergo the ceremony as soon as possible.

For a month before the ceremony the boys who wished to be initiated gathered together in companies of fifty or more and went about visiting the different villages and dancing. When the time for the ceremony came, the members of the different villages brought offerings of goats, and, if they could afford it, of cows. A number of the animals were killed and the contents of the stomach were mixed in a large bowl and smeared upon the boys, who feasted on roasted meat with

boiled vegetables. Each boy then promised to be loyal to the tribe and clan and to adhere to the laws and customs which he had learned during the weeks of preparation.

The boys were made to stand in a line and a medicine-man stepped up to the first, pulled the foreskin out and cut it off with an ordinary knife to the end of the penis. He threw the foreskin down at the feet of the boy and passed on to the next. A second operator with an assistant followed. The assistant held the penis out to its full length and the operator made a cut along each side of the urethra, turned back the skin to the root of the penis, cut it off and threw it on the ground, leaving the strip of skin covering the urethra.

After the operation the boy danced, keeping his eyes turned up to the sky and his hands raised, and singing special words, until the next boy had been operated upon, when the first might sit down. A boy, however, often refused to sit until his father came and promised him a cow. Should a boy show signs of fear, he was so scorned and mocked that he would, unless restrained by some of the elders of the clan, commit suicide. Even a father would scorn a son who was timid, and would not prevent him from killing himself.

At the close of the ceremony the boys were divided into parties and sent to places near their own villages, where they could be nursed during convalescence. At each place a hut was built in an isolated spot for the boys to live in and people from their own village were appointed to look after them. The mother of each boy scraped up the blood and skin of her son from the ground where it lay and brought it in a bundle to the place of convalescence, where it was tied to the roof of the hut.

For six days the boys remained in the hut, and on the seventh they were brought out and were told the secrets of the clan and the medicines for healing various diseases. These secrets they were warned not to reveal to the women whom they might marry. During this time no woman might approach the boys and their food was brought into the hut by young men already initiated. When they left, the bundles of

blood and skin were taken down and, with the hut, were completely destroyed by fire.

The boys were taken to another place where they remained six weeks longer; and at the end of this time, the elders of the clan gathered together in a remote place in the forest. A house was built and large quantities of fire-wood collected, and for a day the elders discussed the qualifications of the boys and agreed upon what should be said to them.

The boys were conducted to this hut, singing as they went, and near the place they met their companions from other centres. The boys of one party were told to crouch down; the boys of the other party stood in front of them and each aimed a blow at one of the crouching boys with a heavy club. As the blow was about to fall, the crouching boy made a leap to the feet of his assailant and evaded it, so that the club struck the ground. The first set of boys then stood up while the others crouched and were attacked in the same way. For this part of the procedure each boy carried a club, a shield, and a creeper twisted into a loop.

In the evening the boys were brought into the house to the elders, one by one, in the order in which they had been circumcised and the elders told them again of the clan customs and secrets and medicines, and impressed upon them that these things must never be revealed. Each boy had to bring to the elders a present of a fowl and some iron finger- and ear-rings.

When the youths were all assembled, some of the old men went out secretly into the grass and howled like wild beasts. The elders told the boys that there were beasts come to catch and kill them, and the boys had to go out singly and face the beasts in the dark. They went out into the grass to hunt the animals; but, as they had been instructed that they might bring something else if they could not find an animal, each returned with some plant which he said had cried out and was therefore alive. This plant or object was a guarantee that the boy had been some distance into the forest, and he had to be able, if required to do so, to take some elder in the morning to the place to which he had gone in the dark. This was the



last trial of bravery, and the boys on their return were admitted to the society of the men.

They were then allowed to rest for a short time, and in the early morning when the first signs of dawn appeared, the elders took them to the nearest stream and washed them in cold running water. A party of men was sent to tell the women in the chief village to boil water for the boys to wash in. In due course the boys came to the village, when the elders put certain herbs into the water and all the initiated youths washed with it, in the order in which they were circumcised, all using water from the same pot, which they took out and poured over themselves in the usual way, for no one ever thought of getting into water as into a bath to wash.

When all were washed, they were given food and were conducted to a prepared house where they met the elders from the several villages to which they belonged, and were given new names. The house was built a short distance off the main village path in the grass or scrub, and a special track was cleared to it. The initiated youths were escorted to the beginning of this new path, where they went down on elbows and knees, covering themselves with cow-hides so that no part of the body was visible. Each youth was accompanied by a relative bearing ornaments which he would receive when he got his new name. This man carried a stick and walked by the boy's side as he crawled from the main path to the house; if the boy allowed a hand or foot to be seen as he crept along, the man struck him gently to draw his attention to the fact. The boys crawled along, looking like turtles, this posture being supposed to show respect to their elders. Each carried a staff which he held vertically; and when they reached the house they formed a line and lowered their staffs to the ground, each gripping the ends of his neighbours' staffs on each side so that they formed an unbroken line. One of the elders came out, and, taking first a little milk and then a little beer into his mouth from vessels placed ready, he puffed over each of the boys in turn, saying, "Live long and excel my years." The boys thanked him with a grunt. He then asked if they



wanted to retain their old names—a question which really meant, “Did they regret the step they had taken and wish to withdraw from the new conditions which had been imposed on them?” To this they signified their dissent by keeping silence. He next asked if they wanted new names, and they shouted “Yes.” When he promised them these, they raised and lowered their sticks four times. The elder went along the line giving each a name according to the instructions received at the meeting of the elders. As he gave the new name he made a cross with fat on the back of each of the skin robes, and, pushing back the robe, laid a lump of fat on the head of the boy. He then took the ornaments from the attendant relative, placed them on the initiated youth, and put on him a new robe, pulling off the old one as he pulled on the new. When the last of the youths was thus robed they all rose to their feet, and, holding their sticks above their heads, jumped and sang, adding to the noise by hitting their sticks against their iron ornaments.

At the close of the ceremony they were given food and spent some five days in feasting and dancing, living during this time in a large house which had been newly built by the chief of the place, who put it at their disposal. When the five days ended the youths took their weapons and sticks and went off to find the Suk or some other enemy whom they might fight and plunder, thus proving themselves worthy to be clan members. If they could find no foe to fight, they threw their sticks into the grass as though spearing a hidden enemy, and retired with their spears and shields. On their return they were considered to be full-grown men and might marry.

Girls, like the boys, underwent a ceremony of initiation, and went through much the same course of preparation and instruction for membership of the clan. They were taken away to some isolated spot for instruction before the time of initiation, and a number of elderly women were chosen for the task of teaching them. They had their own particular songs and forms of dancing, which were conducted by women. The operation was performed on the girls about a week later



Women kneeling awaiting new names



Women kneeling in line covered with cow-skins

Initiation of Women at Sabei, Mount Elgon



Marriage assembly



Marriage dance

Sabei Marriage Ceremony

than on the boys, for they did not take so long to heal and both parties were expected to be ready for the dances and feasts at the same time.

When the time of the operation came, the girls were smeared with the contents of the stomachs of animals killed for the feast and ate the meat of them roasted, as the boys did. Two persons, both women, were required for the operation. The girls were arranged lying in a line a short distance apart, each lying on her back with her head turned towards the east and resting on her right hand. When the operator came, she placed her feet together sole to sole and drew them up until her knees were as far apart as possible. The assistant operator placed her hands on the genital organs and held open the large labia while the operator cut away the small labia and clitoris. A crowd of women always stood round watching for any sign of fear, and if a girl showed signs of timidity, even if her great toes twitched, she was branded as a coward. During the ceremonies and the healing no man was allowed near and other girls brought them their food. So far as it was possible to ascertain, death from haemorrhage rarely occurred, though no treatment was given in the case of either youths or girls. The wounds were left to heal without assistance, and almost invariably did so in about ten days.

When the girls were healed and ready to go out from their isolation, they were taken to a hut where they were to receive their new names. As in the case of the youths, when they reached the path which branched off the road and led to the hut, they went down on their knees and crawled on knees and elbows, with cow-skin robes over them so that only their staffs stuck out. A relative went beside each girl, bearing the ornaments which she would receive when she got her new name. As with the youths, this relative had to see that no part of the body was exposed during the crawl to the house. The girls were asked if they wished to retain their old names, and when they refused by their silence, they were offered new names, to which they agreed. As each was given her new name, she was clothed with a new robe and fat was put on her head.



A woman relative then put a large iron ring round the girl's neck and took the lump of fat from her head.

When both men and women were healed, dancing and feasting began, and they met and arranged their marriages.

#### MARRIAGE

This tribe differed considerably from their neighbours in their method of betrothal, for the couple concerned made their own engagement and asked the consent of the girl's mother. It was the mother's duty to consult her husband as to the amount of the marriage-fee, and when it was paid, she had the disposal of it.

Men and women usually arranged their marriages at the dances after the initiation ceremonies. If during a dance a man saw a girl he desired, he would offer her a cow, which she might accept or refuse. If she accepted she would go with the man to his house for the night, and in the morning he sent a hoe to her mother who, if she approved of the marriage, sent a messenger to inform him of the amount she required for the marriage-fee. If the mother refused to accept the hoe, the man had to return his bride to her home and seek another.

Sometimes, however, a young couple would simply agree at the dance to marry, and later the youth arranged for a number of his friends to go and seize the girl and bring her to him. They took her to the house of a clan relative of the bridegroom, and he joined her there. The boy's father then went to the girl's parents, told them where their daughter was, and arranged the amount of the marriage-fee, first giving a goat, a hoe, and tobacco to the mother. If she refused to accept these, the girl had to return home; but if all went well, the boy paid the marriage-fee, probably a cow or five goats, in addition to the present already given to the mother.

The bride's parents might not go to the wedding feast which was made by the bridegroom's parents, but three pots of beer were sent for them to drink with their relatives and friends at their own home. Members of both clans gathered at the bride-

groom's home, where feasting went on for two days. Each guest usually brought a fowl, and there might be as many as forty fowls for the feast. The girl's parents made two pots of beer and sent it to the man's parents, who might keep it for a few days or drink it at once. After it had been drunk, the bride came out of her seclusion, had her head shaved, and took up her new duties. During the time of the bride's seclusion neither she nor her husband might see their parents-in-law, but when the beer had been drunk and she came out, this taboo ended.

For a month from the time of her coming to her husband, the wife might eat no meat. When this time was over, the husband killed a bul and sent a leg with the entrails, liver, and heart, to his wife's mother as a token of her daughter's happiness, and she was thus satisfied that her daughter was satisfactorily married. The bride's father then killed a bull and sent the back with the loin and kidneys to his daughter. From this time whenever either family killed an animal a portion had to be sent to the other; and when either brewed beer one or more pots were sent to the other household.

There was no restriction as to the number of wives a man might marry except his ability to pay the marriage-fee, and a wealthy man might have as many as ten wives. Each wife had her own house which her husband built for her either on his own or his father's land.

A wife during menstruation might not touch her husband's weapons or traps for game, but she might cook for him.

Fornication was at one time most uncommon, and if it existed at all was kept so secret that it was never heard of. Later, with tribal intercommunication, it became more common. Should a man have sexual relations with a girl who was still in her mother's charge, and the girl conceived, her parents forced her to tell the name of her seducer. Her father and some relatives then went and plundered the man's house and he had to come and plead his cause before them. They said, "You have dishonoured our daughter and must marry her," and the man was given no choice, but had to agree.



He had to pay two cows for the marriage-price and a third for the wrong he had done, and ten pots of beer.

### SICKNESS AND DEATH

In common with other African tribes a wife would seldom undertake the responsibility of treating her husband even for colds or such simple complaints. The fear of being suspected and accused either of being in collusion with some person working magic or of working it herself made her as a rule seek the aid of some relative of her husband. If, however, an illness did not seem to be serious and a man desired it, his wife might treat him with remedies suggested by him, but should they fail she at once informed his brother, who called in a medicine-man and summoned some of the relatives to assist with the nursing.

Should the medicine-man find by augury that the cause of illness was a ghost, a goat was killed and a fowl was tied to the bed. The goat had to be with kid, and the caul and some fat were put on the sick man's head; the medicine-man puffed beer over his head, chest, and back, saying to the ghost, "There is your fowl. Go into that." When the sun was setting the medicine-man took the fowl, with the ghost now in it, into the forest, killed it, and threw the body away. This was the only form of exorcism practised by them.

When a man died there was no burial. The body was cast out upon waste land, and the widows remained in seclusion for four days, after which the members of the dead man's clan gathered and settled who was to be the heir.

If a dead man left property, a cow was killed for a feast at this gathering, but no beer was drunk. If the man chosen as heir was young and the widows old, an older man was appointed to take the widows and part of the property. If, however, the widows were young, the heir, though young, took them all to wife and took all the property.

If a man was struck by lightning, the clan members cut stout branches of trees, stripped them of bark, thus making them white, and planted them round the place to form

an enclosure, in the centre of which was a post to mark the spot.

Suicides were simply thrown out on to waste land and left unburied, and the house was inhabited as before.

The bodies of women were also cast out on to waste land. If a woman died in child-birth, the husband had to give her relatives a cow; but if she died from another cause, her clan gave the husband another woman or five goats, or half the original marriage-price if this had been large.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE BAKAMA AND THE BATWA

Origin of the Bakama—smiths—differences from the Basabei—initiation—marriage—death—the Batwa—food and trade—beer

#### THE BAKAMA

On one of the plateaux of Mount Elgon people were found who were called the Bakama, and who were regarded as a clan of the Sabei tribe. On investigation these were found to be one of the agricultural or artisan clans of Kitara, who came to Mount Elgon from Buruli about the time Kamrasi reigned in Kitara, and who took the name Bakama because of their former allegiance to the Mukama of Kitara. Their totems were *nkima*, the black-faced monkey, and *kisanki*, the grass used for thatching houses; and, as they understood smelting and general iron-work, they were important additions to the Sabei tribe, whose customs they to a large extent adopted.

The clan numbered some six hundred, and included some purely agricultural workers as well as smiths. The iron-workers all taught their sons, who followed their trade, so that the art was confined to certain families. They never made hoes, but only weapons and ornaments.

They retained their old superstitions and gods, but have added and still continue to add to them by adopting the

religious ideas of the people whom they have joined. In certain customs, however, they differed from the Basabei. When twins were born they and their parents were secluded for two months, during which goats and other food had to be collected for a feast when they were brought out. If the father had to go out himself to collect this material he had to find a substitute to remain in his place in the hut and to be with his wife. Should one or both of the twins die, the body was buried in the vicinity of the home and the husband and wife had to leave the hut to attend the burial. At the end of three years, the bones were dug up and carried to a dry cave in the mountain, where they were laid in a safe place. To leave them in the earth to moulder away would prevent the women of the clan from giving birth. At the time of the removal relations and friends came together and rejoiced with beer-drinking and dancing.

In the past, when the tribe inhabited its old country, mutilations were avoided, with the exception of the extraction of six teeth in the lower jaw; but when they had migrated, parents found that their children could not marry into the tribe they had joined. Clan exogamy was their rule; and, in order to obtain husbands for their daughters and wives for their sons, they adopted the Basabei customs of initiation, and all the present generation have been circumcised. They followed the customs of the Bambei, the second division of the Basabei, which varied slightly from those of the Basabei in that the girls were caught and taken in marriage during the dance which followed the circumcision ceremonies. If the bride's mother accepted the youth, the marriage-fee, which was five goats and a bull, was paid. In earlier times girls who were marriageable lived together in a special house, and a man who wished to marry one of them spent the night with her there. The next day he sent a hoe to her parents, this being the usual token by which he asked for their daughter in marriage. If the hoe was accepted, the marriage-fee, which at that period was five or six goats, was arranged and paid; and the bridegroom sent for the girl, who came to him accom-

panied by some twenty companions. These remained with her seven days to dig her new garden, and on their departure were given iron bracelets, necklets, and finger-rings. Should the bride's mother reject the hoe, the man had to seek another maid in marriage, leaving his first choice to some more acceptable suitor.

The dead were simply thrown into waste ground in accordance with the Sabei custom, until the British authorities ordered the chiefs to see that they were buried.

Another small agricultural clan, the *Bagweri*, who lived near these Bakama, were also immigrants from Kitara.

### THE BATWA

A report that there were a number of people called Batwa living on the higher peaks of Elgon aroused much interest, as the name is that given to the pygmies who live in the Congo districts to the west of Lakes Albert and Edward. One or two diminutive Bagesu were even pointed out as being of the type of these Batwa of Elgon. It was difficult to find any members of the clan on the lower mountain slopes, but after some trouble a few were found in forests and on the higher peaks, and were persuaded to come and be interviewed.

The meeting, however, was disappointing, for they were found to be tall men who claimed to be members of the Sabei tribe, who had separated from them and given up all agriculture to follow hunting and trapping, especially of rats and a species of mole. They were few in number and lived scattered over the higher parts of the mountain. They kept a few cows, sheep, and goats, which they herded on the mountain, but they lived mainly on wild animals, which they trapped, and upon young and tender shoots of bamboo, wild honey, and milk. They seldom hunted any game larger than hares, but they trapped rats and moles, which they roasted in their skins, merely removing the entrails. These animals they regarded as a great delicacy. What meat they could spare from their catch they dried and bartered with the other clans for grain, pots, and sheep- and goat-skins for their girdles and shoulder robes.

They visited recognised spots which were known to the agricultural people as market-places for the sale of their products.

They ate the young shoots of the bamboo as vegetables, using only the tender tips; but they dried some ten inches more, which they brought down to the lower parts of the mountain and exchanged for grain. The people who purchased these dry bamboo shoots cut them up and used them, boiled, as a relish with other food.

They brewed a kind of beer from honey, which they extracted from the comb and strained through grass to remove wax. This extracted honey was put in pots and hung on trees for about ten days to ferment, after which it was again filtered through grass to remove any remaining comb; and formed a drink more intoxicating than the millet-beer used by other tribes.

All the customs of initiation and the clan ceremonies of the Basabei were observed as before their severance from the main body. They may therefore be regarded as an offshoot of the tribe.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LANGUAGE OF THE BASABEI

Relationships—divisions of time—counting—currency—vocabulary

#### RELATIONSHIPS

*Father*, baba.

*Mother*, yoyo.

*Brother*, yayanyenyu.

*Sister*, gayenenyu.

*Husband*, boyondenyo.

*Wife*, gorogo.

*Son*, sekwa.

*Daughter*, sekwa.

*Father's mother*, gugo.

*Father's father*, gugo.

*Mother's mother*, kameti.

*Mother's father*, gogo.

*Father's brother*, babausi.

*Father's sister*, senge.

*Mother's brother*, mama.

*Mother's sister*, mama.

*Father's brother's wife*, yoyonyo.

*Father's sister's husband*, bubo.

*Mother's brother's wife*, gogo.

*Mother's sister's husband*, buba.

*Father's brother's son*, sewekino.

*Father's brother's daughter*, kye-minyo.

*Father's sister's son*, mujugoliti.



*Father's sister's daughter*, mujugoliti.

*Mother's brother's son*, kasenyandeti.

*Mother's brother's daughter*, kase-nyandeti.

*Mother's sister's son*, mama.

*Mother's sister's daughter*, mama.

*Son's son*, gugo.

*Son's daughter*, gugo.

*Daughter's son*, gugo.

*Daughter's daughter*, gugo.

*Sister's son*, lekwenyu.

*Sister's daughter*, lekwenyu.

*Brother's son*, lekwenyu.

*Brother's daughter*, lekwenyu.

*Wife's father*, kabigoi.

*Wife's mother*, kyabiyorakabigoi.

*Wife's brother*, kabikoi.

*Wife's sister*, kabikoi.

*Wife's brother's wife*, karoga lwa-lekweti.

*Wife's sister's husband*, bugo-tyenyo.

*Husband's father*, baba.

*Husband's mother*, lwekwenyu.

*Husband's brother*, karogo.

*Husband's sister*, yaiyenyu.

*Husband's brother's wife*, harawe.

*Husband's sister's husband*, harawe.

*Son's wife*, eyonyo.

*Daughter's husband*, sandeta lwa lwekwenyu.

*Elder brother*, katini nyene.

*Younger brother*, katini nyini.

### SEASONS

These people had no means of marking dates though they could give a general idea of the time of an event not more than a year old. When a child was born, its age might be remembered for a few weeks but, beyond that, age was judged by the appearance of the person—by the size of the breasts in girls and by the signs of adolescence in boys. For their own purposes they divided the year into moons which were named:

*August*, Mugeyo.

*October*, Tamwa.

*December*, Teriti.

*February*, Wagiabureti.

*April*, Lalabehi.

*June*, Sundetabureti.

*September*, Tedere.

*November*, Watukob.

*January*, Wagitiabutai.

*March*, Labutoi.

*May*, Sundetabutai.

*July*, Silwona.

The beginning of the year was *Togo*, or *Kenyini*. The season of the lesser rains (*kenyino*) was *Dumbi* and the heavy rains were *Bengati*. The season of the hottest sun was *Kimei*. *Kyawalaseti*, the rainbow. *Katulili*, thunder. *Ela* or *elet*, lightning.

### COUNTING

1. *Agenge*, index-finger extended.
2. *Ayenyi*, index and second finger extended.
3. *Simoko*, index-finger bent in and others extended.



4. *Mweni*, four fingers extended in pairs.
5. *Muntu*, closed fist.
6. *Muntunekagenge*, closed fist and index-finger of other hand put to it.
7. *Muntuagayene*, two fingers laid in the other hand.
8. *Muntuasomoka*, three fingers of the left laid in the right hand.
9. *Muntuangwe*, closed fist and four fingers of the other hand extended.
10. *Tamani*, two closed fists.

For the higher numbers they brought bits of stick for each ten.

### CURRENCY

Two cows=a woman.

Twenty goats=a female cow.

Ten goats=a young bull.

Twenty fowls=a female goat.

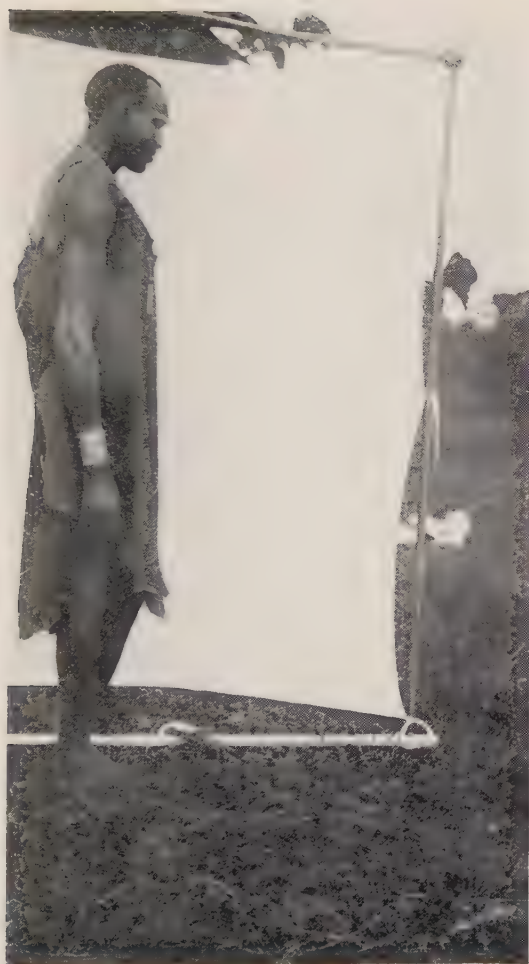
Fifteen fowls=a male goat.

Five rats=a bunch of plantain.

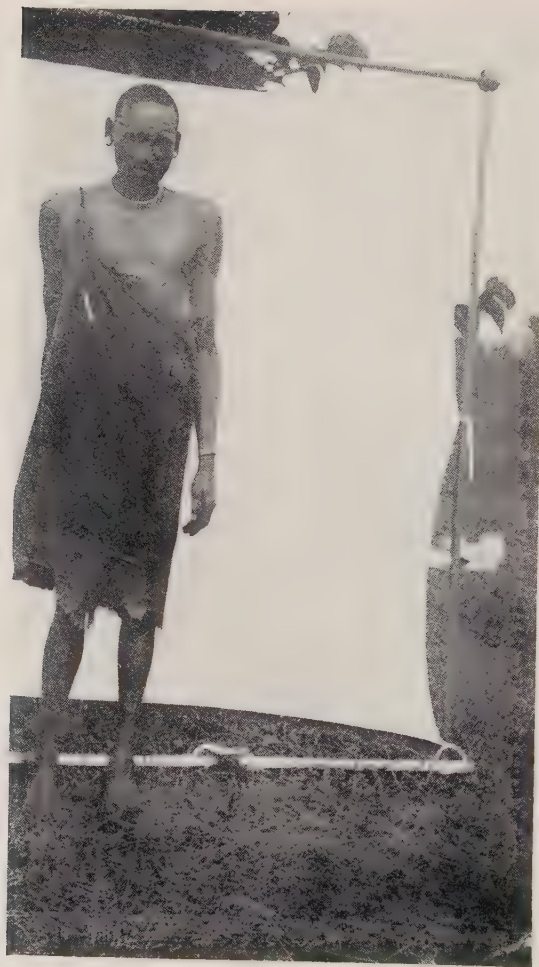
Ten rats=a basket of grain about 20 lbs.

### VOCABULARY

<i>All</i> , tokole	<i>child</i> , lehweta
<i>arm</i> , out	<i>club</i> , koroita
<i>arrow</i> , kotet	<i>come</i> , jo
<i>Back</i> , runget	<i>command</i> , kayaroriki
<i>bad</i> , miat	<i>cut</i> , kateri
<i>be</i> , to, unyoto	<i>Dance</i> , tumuto ( <i>sing</i> )
<i>beast</i> , kyonito	<i>dark</i> , komoye
<i>beautiful</i> , natebon (i.e. <i>perfect</i> , good)	<i>die</i> , kami
<i>believe</i> , kajam	<i>do</i> , isiet
<i>bird</i> , gogele	<i>dream</i> , ilwotegi
<i>bitter</i> , nywe	<i>drink</i> , kiye
<i>black</i> , nyetuwi	<i>Ear</i> , ititi
<i>blood</i> , koroti	<i>earth</i> , tenyek
<i>body</i> , oluta	<i>eat</i> , kyokyamu
<i>bone</i> , kawet	<i>enemy</i> , mihati
<i>born</i> , to be, kirikwet	<i>eye</i> , konyita
<i>bow</i> , eyanda	<i>False</i> , kiberabera
<i>breath</i> , itit	<i>fear</i> , nyogor
<i>bright</i> , ayosit	<i>few</i> , minini
<i>burn</i> , kabere	<i>fight</i> , bori
<i>Carry</i> , kusut	<i>fire</i> , mata
<i>chief</i> , munongotya	<i>fish</i> , buburunik
	<i>food</i> , oniki



Man of the Batwa tribe, Mount Elgon



Man of the Batwa tribe, Mount Elgon

*foolish*, minyi  
*foot*, kerengeti  
*forest*, samita or wogeti  
*friend*, jolwa

*Ghost*, oike  
*give*, kikono  
*go*, yau  
*good*, natebon (*beautiful*)  
*green*, ata

*Hair*, kurore  
*hand*, auti  
*hard*, nyewahi  
*hate*, katai  
*head*, mititi  
*hear*, kalimi  
*heart*, muguliito  
*heavy*, nigisi  
*high*, tarat  
*house*, kwota

*I*, aninyo  
*it*, kinigyo

*Kill*, kabala  
*know*, karim

*Large*, kyamos  
*leg*, aita  
*lie down*, to, eru  
*light*, koskos  
*live*, pabani  
*liver*, augutani  
*long*, koi  
*loud*, kwanangarhusi  
*love*, gyamike  
*low*, lingit

*Man*, muroni  
*many*, bagalai  
*marry*, kamutu kurogo  
*moon*, awareti  
*mountain*, legamet  
*mouth*, kotati

*Nails*, bulo  
*neck*, katit  
*new*, kalai  
*no*, katai or kutai  
*nose*, siruti

*not*, buliegi

*Old*, boyo

*Palm*, tabesta  
*part*, muroro

*Quick*, lawkar

*Red*, ara  
*river*, ainet  
*run*, ogonyi

*Sea*, ainet (*river*)  
*see*, kukasi  
*shadow*, atotoeto  
*she*, anenya (*thou*)  
*shield*, longet  
*short*, onwak  
*shoulder*, leet  
*sing*, tumuto (*dance*)  
*sit*, tebinguyi, burunguyi  
*skin*, rihondeti  
*sky*, talati  
*sleep*, rungunyi  
*slow*, kiomoti  
*small*, kisiki  
*smell*, samisi  
*soft*, bunubun  
*sorcerer*, wologoyo  
*soul*, mugule  
*speak*, ngowo kumwo  
*spear*, ngotit  
*stand*, ionyi  
*star*, ogelek  
*stone*, lwandet, lwondo  
*strike*, kumiri  
*sun*, asisista  
*sweet*, anyingot

*Take*, sutwe  
*taste*, ngoranyi  
*tell*, jokumo  
*that*, onyin  
*they*, birine  
*thing*, terekwo  
*think*, tunuwo  
*this*, onyi  
*thou*, anenya (*she*)  
*tongue*, eleta

*tooth*, kaleke  
*touch*, bulyokonani  
*tree*, kitiki  
*true*, kuromsgota  
*Ugly*, mietini  
*Walk*, yabucheki  
*war*, borei, setetwa  
*water*, bego  
*we*, ajek  
*which*, kinegyo

*white*, nyerere  
*who*, ngomere  
*whole*, tegutukole  
*wise*, netinyarek  
*wish*, kajamekuwo  
*woman*, kurogo  
*word*, nalek  
  
*Yes*, kajamu  
*you*, wenyō  
*young*, kisiki





Teso granaries



# THE BATESO

## CHAPTER XIV

### A NILOTIC TRIBE

Clans and totems—government—robbery—murder and suicide—the cattle—agriculture—clothing and ornaments—rain-making—birth—training of children—marriage—adultery and fornication—death—mourning—inheritance

THE following notes are supplementary to those given in the *Northern Bantu* and give in some cases customs which differ from those described there.

This tribe was a large one and the villages, which were numerous, seemed prosperous. The cattle, which were of a kind with a hump, were plentiful and in good condition. The tribe was divided into clans which were totemic, though I have not been able to find many of the totems. The clan divisions were used to settle marriage questions, for the tribe practised clan exogamy. The names of the clans were:

Magoro, totem <i>mpeyo</i> =kind of antelope.	Ipalama. Iyale.
Yatekoko.	Nyakwe, totem <i>ngabi</i> =kind of antelope.
Iraraka.	Gwarimota, totem <i>nyana</i> =calf.
Inyakoi.	Emesina, totem <i>nyonyi</i> =bird.
Igolya.	

The clans were often at enmity and fought each other frequently, the warriors carrying spears and shields.

### GOVERNMENT

There were no chiefs who had any extended authority, though here and there a man might make himself the head of several villages. As a rule, however, each village had its own head-man who settled all disputes in it, and there was no possibility of appeal to any higher authority. There was no

taxation, but the village chief might call men to build or to dig for him, and in payment gave them meat and beer.

Robbery was not common, but there were certain men who were known to be expert thieves and who were hired by others to steal for them. They took auguries by the *ngato* leathers (v. p. 108) to find out where and how to do the required work, and were often tracked afterwards by their foot-prints. (If one was killed, the man who had hired him had to pay one or two cows to the relatives of the dead man, and had to supply his father with a girl who might bear him another child to take the place of the dead son.) Should a thief be captured and brought to trial, he was punished by a fine.

If a murderer escaped, the offended clan killed some member of the murderer's clan and were satisfied.

If a man wounded another while out hunting, they would most probably settle the affair on the spot by a free fight during which some men were sure to be killed.

A man who committed suicide was buried by his relatives in the ordinary way.

#### OCCUPATIONS

Cows were numerous, for even a poor peasant usually possessed four or five and women also kept a few. The cattle of a village were kept together in a stockade at one side of the village, though sometimes they were kept in it.

When a cow calved, the milk was left to the calf for three days. The cow was then milked and the milk cooked until it formed a solid cake, which was eaten by members of the owner's family before the milk might be used in the ordinary way.

The small millet, called *bulo*, was the staple food, but other millet was also grown and from it beer was brewed. Sorghem, sweet potatoes, ground nuts, and semsem were also grown and of late years Europeans have settled in the country and are growing cotton.

#### CLOTHING

(Fifteen years ago when I visited this people they wore no clothing at all,) though they wore ornaments of different

kinds. Young women pinched up and pierced the flesh of their chests and threaded in the holes rows of fine iron rings about the size of finger-rings. The more wealthy people wore wire or strings of beads or cowry-shells round their waists, necks, upper arms, and wrists. The ears were pierced from the lobes right round the helix and small brass or iron rings were inserted. A few girls wore aprons, some six inches broad and four deep, of plaited fibre decorated with beads or cowry-shells, but even these were regarded as ornaments, not as covering.

Of later years, however, the steady influx of Indian traders and settlers has altered the people's outlook, and garments of cotton and calico are generally worn, with the addition, in most cases, of ornaments.

### RELIGION

The only religious ceremonies seemed to be those of rain-making. When rain was wanted the people took branches and danced round some hill or rock singing to *Edeke* who was the creator. They splashed water about and prayed for rain and good crops.

### BIRTH

When a woman conceived, she informed her mother, who came and stayed with her until the birth and the period of seclusion were over and the woman was able to go about again. The mother acted as midwife during the birth. The cord was cut with a knife and the placenta was buried, by the midwife in the house, on the far side from the bed. The mother was isolated for five days, after which she was brought out to be purified and the house was swept out and fresh grass laid on the floor. During the time of seclusion no fire or fire-wood might be taken from the house, but there was no other taboo.) (A child was named at birth, and at six months old it was made to sit up. The mother usually nursed it for from eighteen months to two years.)

Little boys were taught to herd calves, and at about the age of seven they went out with the herdsmen and learned how to look after the cows. (At about the age of seven also

the girls began to learn to dig and do the other work of women.)

At puberty both boys and girls had the two lower incisors extracted. It was unheard of for anyone to refuse this, and boys and girls were usually eager to have it done in order to be considered grown-up.

#### MARRIAGE

The usual clan exogamy prevailed among these people, and as marriages were arranged by the parents, questions of relationship and clan membership seldom presented any difficulty. (Boys and girls were betrothed in infancy and never thought of rebelling against the arrangement made for them.) Most men contented themselves with one wife, though there seemed to be no restriction as to the number of women a man might marry.)

(When a marriage was arranged, the boy's father gave a cow to the girl's parents as a pledge, and the acceptance of this was the agreement to the marriage.) When the girl grew up her mother brewed beer and summoned the prospective husband to come and drink and settle the marriage-fee, which amounted to from ten to twenty cows.)

When he had succeeded in obtaining the required number of cows, the bridegroom, with a companion, took them in the afternoon to the bride's home and brought her away, timing their journey to reach her new home about four in the afternoon. Four girl friends accompanied the bride and remained with her for two days. Before they departed the bridegroom gave them a sheep, or, if he was a poor man, a fowl. On the day of her arrival the bride brought in water and cooked a meal. (The newly-married couple lived with the bridegroom's parents until the bride had dug her field and grown enough food to support her husband and herself. The husband then built his own house near and they moved into it.) If a man married more than one wife he built each a house in his village.)

When a man committed adultery, the aggrieved man called



together his friends and they attacked the offender's house, carrying off all his goods and despoiling his field. To redeem his possessions he had to bring a cow and five sheep.)

When a girl was found to have gone wrong and to be with child, she was beaten by her parents until she confessed the name of the guilty man. He was then accused and fined a cow and five sheep. The child was looked upon as the child of the woman's husband whether she married the seducer or another.)

### DEATH

When a man died his widow or widows slept beside the body for two days before it was buried. They threw all kinds of grain upon the body in the grave and also threw in the first earth. A cow or bull was killed and the body wrapped in the skin, while the meat was eaten by the mourners during the days of mourning. The grave was dug in the house where the man had died and mourning went on for five days, the people wailing each morning at four o'clock. On the third day a second cow was killed and eaten by the mourners, and on the fifth day they departed to their own homes.)

The widows remained in the house and mourned for some five months. It used to be customary for widows to commit suicide by ripping up their stomachs or by hanging themselves, but they were guarded and might even be tied up to prevent this. There was no purificatory ceremony after the mourning, and the widows themselves arranged how long they would mourn.)

The first time beer was brewed after the death, a little was thrown on the grave.

When the heir came to take possession of the house and property, he killed a third cow or bull and brewed beer. He then summoned the members of his clan to eat and drink with him, which was the last ceremony of the funeral. The heir took possession of the widows, but if one chose she might return home if the original marriage-fee was repaid. The house was kept in repair and the people continued to live in it as before.

## INHERITANCE

If a man had a son old enough to manage his property, he was usually the heir, but if he had no grown-up son, a relative, usually a brother, was appointed to inherit. If there were several sons in the family, the eldest took the house and the widows, but the others received each a share of the cattle. (Sometimes a man gave his wives presents of cattle during his lifetime, and in that case, the widows retained possession of these when they became the wives of his heir)

# BUSOGA

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT

Early condition and later subservience—effects of rule of Kitara—taxation by Buganda—training of chiefs—clan land—chiefs—the great chief—lesser chiefs—right of appeal—the clans and their totems—taxation—punishment—murder and suicide

THE people of Busoga who were examined were purely negro in type, though of a somewhat higher development than the Bagesu on Mount Elgon. They were of the same class as the peasants of Kitara or Bunyoro, with broad noses and thick lips. At one time they formed a collection of small independent family groups, whose only connecting link was the intermarriage rendered necessary by the laws of clan exogamy. In later years, however, the Bakitara, or Banyoro, became overlords of the country, and the scattered family groups were united into districts governed by chiefs. These chieftainships were hereditary; but disputes often arose as to which son should inherit, and such questions were settled by the king of Kitara. The people of Busoga called the Bakitara, *Baduli*, and their country, *Buduli*. Later the Baganda began to encroach upon much of the land which belonged or was subservient to Kitara; and by degrees the whole of Busoga, with the exception of one district, came under the rule of the *Kabaka*, or king, of Buganda.

The effects of the rule of Kitara are still plainly visible, for the people follow in many ways the customs of the Bakitara. For example, at puberty they extract the six front teeth in the lower jaw, and many of their ceremonies, especially those connected with death and mourning, are similar to those of their former overlords. Their language, too, was much influenced by Lunyoro and when contact with Buganda became

close, the combined effect was such that nothing is now left to show what the original tongue was.

Under the rule of the king of Buganda, the Basoga were not subject to any fixed taxation, but messengers were sent into the country each year to collect a tax, and the king, if he found himself in need of animals or slaves, would send into Busoga and demand to be supplied with what he required. The tax in itself was not heavy, but the messengers sent to collect it seized the opportunity and demanded as much as they liked, keeping the surplus for themselves. It was this additional burden which caused the chiefs of Busoga, in later years, to ask that the British would free them from the yoke of Buganda.

Another effect of this subservience to a neighbouring kingdom was that the sons of chiefs were sent at one time to the court of the king of Kitara and later to that of the king of Buganda. This was not only a method of educating the sons of the chiefs, but it ensured that these boys would succeed to the chieftainships of their own country and rise to high positions there. Each of the greater chiefs of Busoga had a small estate in Buganda, which was looked after for him by a steward. He was thus enabled to visit Buganda and remain there for some considerable time, living on the products of his own land.

#### LAND

The clans of the Basoga did not keep themselves entirely separate or confine themselves strictly to their own localities, but to a certain extent they scattered and mixed. Each clan, however, had land which belonged to it, and the head of the clan was known as the *Mutaka* or freeholder. This land could never pass from the ownership of the clan, and a clan member who was granted land by the head of the clan could not be deprived of it. There was always plenty of land, and a clan member who desired to possess some had merely to apply to the head of the clan, who would allocate to him a certain defined portion. A member of another clan might be allowed to cultivate land, but only as a tenant (*musiga*) whose land

might be taken from him if it was required for a member of the clan to which it belonged.

The paramount chief, or *Mwami*, in each district was also the head of the clans in that district, the office being hereditary. He was regarded as the owner of all the land, and could grant to any man a piece of ground which would become the freehold of his family. The *Mwami* gave the man a tree which he planted on the ground, and when he died, his son buried him in this ground and claimed it as his by virtue of the tree and of his father's grave. If, however, a man buried his dead in any place without the sanction of the *Mwami*, and later became owner of another piece of land, he might be ordered by the *Mukungu*, or secondary chief, to remove his dead, even of two generations, and bury them in his own land.

The members of each clan were careful to see that their rights of property in land were not infringed. The possession of land was a frequent cause of disputes and fighting between clans and tribes. The members of two clans would often fight the matter out, and the stronger side took possession of the disputed ground. At times, however, the clan which had transgressed beyond its own boundaries would consent to withdraw and allow the matter to be settled by arbitration. When the matter concerned two districts, it was left to the *Mwami*, or paramount chiefs, to arrange.

### THE CHIEFS

The superior chief or *Mwami* in a district was regarded as the owner of all the land in that district and as the head of the clans there. He tried any cases which were referred to him from the lesser chiefs, and might refer them in his turn to the king of Buganda, but there were no regular court fees. The names of the chiefs of the districts at the time of my visit were: Wakole of Mukama, Kitimba of Mukama, Luba or Mutabula of Mukama, Zibondo of Mukama, Kisiginya, Miro, Zimba of Mukama, Tabingwa of Mukama, Menya of Bugwire of Mukama.

When a chief left his district to visit friends or to go to



Buganda, he appointed in his place someone in whom he had confidence. During the chief's absence this man was regarded as the chief, and for anyone to treat him with disrespect or abuse him was a criminal offence punishable by a heavy fine.

The first great chief was said to have been a prince of Kitara, called *Kitimbo*, who came with his brothers *Musali* and *Ngobe* from Kitara and ruled Busoga. His descendants, who succeeded him and were chiefs of western Busoga with the official title of *Kitimbo*, were Mawarara—Nadiope—Kagoda—Gabula—Kajumbula—Mutilwa—Naika, who was deposed by the British—Nadiope. These chiefs, who claimed to be descendants of *Kitimbo*, were considered of greater importance than all other chiefs. Should any person commit adultery with a wife of one of them, he and his whole clan were put to death and their lands and other property were confiscated. The mother of such a chief was known as *Namasole*, and possessed land in her own right, where she had complete power, trying cases through her own prime minister or *Katikiro*. No other woman in the land possessed property. The sister of such a chief or of any district chief, was an important person and invariably married some chief in the same district, having due regard to the rules of clan exogamy. She possessed no property and her position after marriage depended on that of her husband.

The second grade of chiefs were known as the *Bakungu* and they, with the third grade, the *Bamitale*, formed a council to assist the superior chiefs when required. The *Bamitale* were appointed by the district chiefs or *Mwami*, who had the right to appoint any man to one of these posts, regardless of clan, and to depose him. Usually another man of the same clan as the former holder succeeded to such an office, but this was not a binding rule. Below the *Bamitale* was yet another rank of chiefs who were known as the *Wakisoko*.

When a cause arose which had to be settled by law, the litigants probably appealed to the chief who was in direct touch with them, but they had also the right to appeal to the higher courts of the superior chiefs, who in turn might carry



cases to the king of Buganda; this, however, was rather an expensive proceeding, for not only must they take presents of cattle to the king, but they had to be prepared to give handsome presents to any Muganda chief through whose lands they passed on their way to the court of the king.

### THE CLANS

The following is a list of a number of the clans of the Basoga given at this time:

CLAN	TOTEM
Baise mbupi	<i>Njazi</i> , antelope
„ magaya	<i>Ngonya</i> , crocodile
„ ndigo	<i>nfumbe</i> , monkey, and <i>nyonyi</i> , a bird
Basubu	<i>musisi wa bulo</i> , chaff of millet
Baise nulondo	<i>nkima</i> , monkey?
Bakose	<i>musisi wa bulo</i> , chaff of millet
Baise kidugu	<i>mamba</i> , lung-fish?
Banangwi	<i>mbuzi</i> , goat
Baise musobya	<i>nkobe</i> , large monkey?
„ mwasi	<i>ndaza</i> (? <i>njazi</i> , antelope?)
„ muchwa	<i>ndiga</i> , sheep
„ muiiri	<i>mpindi</i> , beans
„ ngobe (chief)	<i>ngabi</i> , bush-buck
Basoko	<i>mpongo</i> , antelope?
Baise musoswe	<i>mpisi</i> , hyaena
Bakoyo	<i>nabibalu</i> , or <i>mamba</i> , lung-fish?
Baise kisigi	<i>nyonyi miweba</i> , a bird
Bapina	<i>nkofu</i> , guinea-fowl
Baganza	<i>mbuzi wa kubuli</i> , goat that cast its young
Baise ndasi	<i>mpewo</i> , antelope
„ kaboza	<i>mpindi</i> , beans
„ sanga	<i>nkofu</i> , guinea-fowl
„ mukaya	<i>mpanda</i> , ground-nuts
„ egaga	<i>musisi wa bulo</i> , husks of millet
„ bagaya	<i>nyonyi</i> , bird
„ kisukwe	<i>butiko</i> , mushroom? ( <i>tabitantyo</i> , a vegetable?)
„ ngwa	<i>mbuzi</i> , goat
„ semakika	<i>mbogo</i> , buffalo
„ rungu	<i>nyangi</i> , white bird
„ nkwanga	<i>njovu</i> , elephant

### TAXATION

The chiefs had no power to impose taxation for their own benefit, but the people would bring them gifts of animals and

vegetable food at times by their own free will. The king of Buganda, however, imposed regular taxes and sent his own messengers to see to their collection. These tax collectors took up their abode with different chiefs and made known the amount of the tax which had to be paid. The people were expected to bring their share of the tax to the chief's house, where the total amount was gathered together. There was no legal method of assessing the tax, and the people, by bribery or other methods, made the best bargain they could with the collector, who not only wished to take to the king as much as he could in order to be commended and rewarded, but tried to obtain something beyond the king's requirements, which he could keep for himself. It was this method of tax-collecting which made the rule of Buganda obnoxious to the Basoga, who on the arrival of the British asked to be relieved therefrom. The tax was usually paid in slaves, cattle, and bark-cloths which were specially made for the purpose and brought tied in bundles of fifty. The chief in whose place the collection was made received some of these and the rest were conveyed to Buganda.

#### CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

The usual method of punishment was by fines, which were often so heavy as to necessitate years of hard labour before the man was free from debt. Imprisonment in the stocks was used more as a method of detention until a case could be tried than as a means of punishment, though for adultery or theft a man might, in addition to being heavily fined, be flogged and put in the stocks until the fine was paid or someone was found to stand surety for its payment. The greatest hardship of detention in the stocks was the difficulty of obtaining food, for there was no prison fare and the person had to depend on the pity and generosity of friends. If, however, a man was convicted of being a confirmed stealer of vegetables from the gardens or of animals, or of making a practice of breaking into houses by digging under the walls, he was put to death, usually by being speared.

Murder was not a common crime and it was usually not difficult to discover the murderer, for men seldom wandered beyond the range of their own village and friends. When a murder was committed, it was the duty of the dead man's clan fellows to seek out the murderer and avenge the death. Fear of the vengeance of the ghost, which might punish them with illness or even death for negligence, made the clan members eager in their search for justice.

If a man killed another of the same clan, he himself was caught and killed, unless he succeeded in taking refuge with some other tribe. In that case he allowed some four or five years to pass, and, when the bitterness had died down, he returned and paid a fine of a cow in settlement of the affair. Even if the murder was accidental, the man fled from his home and lived in some secret place until the fine had been paid and the matter settled. Any man who had killed another had to live and eat alone until he had atoned for his wrong and been reconciled.

If a man murdered one of another clan, the relatives of the murdered man raised the alarm, whereupon the clan rushed to arms and prepared for war. The chief might succeed in restraining his people while he went to the chief of the other clan to demand the person of the murderer. If he was given up, he was killed and the matter ended, but if the chief refused to give him up, the two clans fought until a few deaths and some wounds induced the injured clan to consent to a settlement by arbitration.

A man, however, who killed another in battle was treated with respect, received presents from his chief and was feasted and praised by all. In this case there was no separation from his friends nor was any purification required.

Should any man spit upon another, the injured man might kill him without being accused of murder.

A man who committed suicide was never buried, but the body was cast out on to waste land. Should the deed have been done by hanging on a tree, the tree was cut down, cast on to waste land near the body and burned. A house which

was the scene of a suicide was also destroyed by fire. The idea evidently was to dislodge the ghost from the place lest others might be induced to commit the same crime.

## CHAPTER XVI

### RELIGION

Sacred places—the gods—ghosts—removing illness—worship of dead chiefs—rain-making—auguries by the *ngato* leathers—workers of evil magic—the new moon—earthquakes—water-spirits—tree-spirits

THOUGH the religion of the Basoga was polytheistic and the gods had their temples and their priests (called, as in Kitara, the *Bachwezi*), there was no definite or systematic form of worship, though certain requests were made through the priests at the temples of the gods. In some places there were sacred hills and rocks which were said to be animated by spirits, and to these the people went in time of need. They built small shrines and made offerings to the spirits of the place, calling upon them for help. At these places as at the temples there was no ordered form or stated time of worship, but offerings and prayers were made when the need arose.

The names of the gods were:

*Lubare*, the creator. He had numbers of shrines in different parts of the country to which people went with offerings and requests. The priest presented the offerings to *Lubare* and then killed fowls in front of the shrine and divided them. One-half went to the people who had brought the offerings and the other to the priests.

*Lubanga*, the god who healed sickness.

*Kintu*, the helper of women in child-birth.

*Walumbe*, the god of the dead. To him all the departed souls went soon after death to report themselves. Singularly, *Walumbe* was also the god who gave women children. Each

newly-married woman went to ask his blessing in order that she might bear children. If a wife of a chief had no children, he sent her with offerings to this god.

*Watambogo*, the god of the hills and of gifts.

*Musisi*, the god of earthquake.

*Kiwanuka*, the god of thunder.

Each family adopted one of these gods as its special deity to whom the members might turn in times of extreme need. The priests were known as *Bachwezi* and might be either male or female. They dwelt in the temples and acted as intermediaries between the people and the gods. They had mediums who communicated directly with the gods and through them the people received oracles.

As a rule only men approached the priests in order to appeal to the gods, but a man might on occasions send his wife, accompanied by a suitable escort. Sometimes women who were childless would stand on ant-hills and call upon the gods to help them, promising substantial gifts in return for a child. They would also sometimes steal away to the priests and pray for help to have a child. When a child was born after such a visit, the woman and her husband visited the shrine and gave a gift of a goat and fowls. No children were ever given to the gods for the temples.

The gods, however, concerned the people much less directly than the ghosts of their ancestors. The ghosts were regarded as phantoms and spoken of as air, but the people built shrines for them and were convinced of their power to help or injure the living. Though invisible, they dwelt in the vicinity of their living relatives and their influence could be felt.

When a man died, he was believed to remain among the plantains near the place where the body lay, to watch what was done, for the treatment of the body affected the future of the ghost. The body was always buried in the earth and a mound or ridge of earth, sloping to the ground all round and rising to a height of about eighteen inches, was made over the grave. This mound was beaten hard and had to be kept in good repair and not allowed to crumble away, for it was



the roof of the grave and served to keep it dry. At the head of the grave a shrine was built, which in the case of a peasant took the form of a small hut, while that at the grave of a chief was quite a large building in which his widows resided during the mourning and where one of them took up her residence to guard the grave. The grave was guarded and kept in repair sometimes for as long as eight years, for any neglect would annoy the ghost, which would cause illness or trouble in the family.

Offerings were made to ghosts of the family and also to important ghosts of the clan. These usually took the form of cattle, which were killed at the shrine and eaten in communion with the ghost. The ghost of one of its ancestors became the guardian of a child, though it was never supposed to enter into it as its animating spirit.

No shrines were built for women, and as a rule no attention was paid to their ghosts; but offerings might be made to the husband of a dead woman by members of the clan when there was illness among the children of the clan, and he would be requested to entreat his wife's ghost to spare the children.

Ghosts which were said to be causing illness had to be prevented from passing from one place to another, and for this purpose bark-cloths were hung on trees; beer was poured out at the roots and a pot was put under the tree. Passers-by were thus freed from the danger of being caught by the ghost. When, however, a hostile ghost succeeded in catching a man as he passed along a road, the man soon fell ill and had to send for the medicine-man to find out the cause. When the medicine-man discovered the presence of the ghost, he sang and made enchantments until it came out, when he caught it in grass, put it in a pot, and carried it away. For this work he had to be paid a goat, which he took home with him and either ate it or added it to his herd as he wished.

The bodies of great chiefs were treated differently from those of ordinary men, for the skull or sometimes the jaw-bone of a dead chief was removed and decorated, after which it was placed first in the shrine in which lay the skull or jaw-



bone of his predecessor. After a number of years, sometimes as many as ten, a new shrine was built near the former one and the latest skull was placed in it for worship. The time of erecting this shrine was a season of public rejoicing; cows were killed for food and much beer was drunk. There was a high priest in this shrine whose office was confined to one clan. When a priest died, many months were often allowed to elapse before the election of a new holder of the office.

The common people regarded these skulls with much reverence, but they did not pray to them. The chiefs alone sent an annual offering of a cow as well as many other offerings of girls, cows, goats, or sheep, whenever there was any trouble. The girls thus dedicated were used to dig on the estates of the dead chief, and if one wished to marry, her clan might redeem her by sending another girl to take her place. In return for these offerings, the high priest consulted the oracle and gave information connected with the civil and political affairs of the country. He never concerned himself with personal matters.

When people wanted rain, they might apply to a chief, who demanded presents from them. He then sent to the high priest and made known their wishes. As a rule, however, when rain was wanted, the chief applied to certain medicine-men known as *Basawa* who were important chiefs themselves. The chief provided an animal, usually a bull, and called the medicine-man to come with his fetishes. A fire was made before the fence of the chief and prayers were offered for rain, after which the bull was killed. The medicine-man took some of the liver and heart of the animal killed, cut them up, cooked them, and threw the pieces about for the ghosts, who in return caused the rain to fall. The meat of the sacrifice belonged to the medicine-man. People sometimes tried to bring rain for themselves. They made large fires upon which they threw damp grass and leaves so that dense clouds of smoke arose, and they beat drums to imitate thunder. They called upon the ghosts of their fathers and offered them beer which they drank in communion with them.

Auguries for discovering a theft or other crime were often taken by means of the *ngato* leathers, which were pieces of leather, nine in number, made of thick cow-hide, and measuring five inches by three. The medicine-man threw these along a strip of leather and by their position read his augury. The office was hereditary and each man taught his skill to his son, who succeeded him.

There were certain men, the *Basizi*, who made magic for evil purposes and who were dreaded and if caught were burnt to death without mercy. They were said to come by night and dig up dead bodies from which they made medicine. They sprinkled this on gardens and cursed the place and people. When the owners of a garden found that such magic had been used, they left the place in terror and it was allowed to become waste. The *Basizi* were also said to be able to make fire by clapping their hands. Thus the whole population of a village might be made to flee from the place, which soon became a wilderness.

The new moon was always hailed with delight and people believed that it brought blessing. Mothers took their babies out and tried to make them look at the new moon, for that ensured health and rapid growth.

When there was an earthquake, a woman with child tied a band tight round her waist and all animals with young had bands tied round them, lest the young should be startled and made to jump and bring about premature birth.

When streams had to be crossed, coffee beans were scattered to appease the water-spirit. A woman while menstruating was never allowed to enter a canoe to cross a river, for the canoe would certainly be sunk by the water-spirit. The water-spirits had to be appeased before the body of a drowned man could be taken from a river, as is described later in the section upon Death (chapter XVIII).

All big trees were feared because they were the abode of spirits, and the members of a clan were afraid to cut down any big trees on their land. To overcome this difficulty they called in peasants from another place to come and fell the

tree and cut it into boards. A goat or a sheep was tied to the tree and was then killed, and the men who had been sent for ate the meat in communion with the tree-spirit before they began to fell the tree. These spirits of trees and of water were of quite a different order from the spirits of men, but though they were not ghosts, they possessed superhuman power and were able to injure people if offended and to make them prosper if pleased.

## CHAPTER XVII

### OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE

The cows—milk restrictions—milk-pots—crops—plantains—millet—the first-fruits—brewing beer from millet—sowing maize—other crops—semsem—preparing food—clothing—preparation of bark-cloth—ornaments—building huts—taboos while building a new house—building canoes—canoes and tree-spirits—pottery—amusements—bands—hunting—taboos of hunters—care of dogs—fishing—warfare—arms of warriors—killing an enemy—treatment of wounds

### CARE OF THE COWS

IN Busoga each man was the real owner of his cows and no one had the right to deprive him of any, though his chief often succeeded in obtaining some by the imposition of fines. The cows of Busoga were smaller than those in most parts of Uganda; they were black or black with white markings, and had a small hump and short horns. In many respects they were closely allied to the buffalo and were uncertain in temper and rather wild. There were no large herds, for even the chiefs had only a few animals; but every peasant, however poor, kept at least one cow, while some had as many as ten.

The cows were taken out to pasture during the day and were tied to posts in the houses by night. Men or men and boys herded them, and sometimes they were looked after with the goats and sheep by children; but women were not allowed to herd or to milk, though they might help to drive the cows into the houses at night or to let them out in the morning.

Boys were taught at an early age to look after and take entire charge of the cows and they acted as herdsmen to their fathers or hired themselves out to other men. Should a boy offend his master he might flog him or dismiss him, and the boy himself was free to leave his master whenever he felt so inclined. No regular payment was made for service, but a boy who was quick and a good worker was sure of promotion and might in time become a chief.

Milk restrictions were few and chiefly connected with the birth of calves. Among some clans, when a cow calved, the owner appointed a boy, his own son if possible, to drink the milk for three days. If he had no son he had to choose a boy over whom he had control, in order to be sure that the boy did not eat or drink anything which might, by sympathetic magic, injure the cow or its calf. When the umbilical cord dropped from the calf the owner might also drink the milk, and after that the taboo was ended and anyone might drink it. In other clans the boy chosen for the purpose took the first lot of milk and put it in some place of safety. The second milking might be drunk by anyone. When the milk of the first milking was clotted, the boy summoned some companions and shared it with them. Women might never drink the milk from a cow which had just calved.

Milk was drunk fresh or mixed with salt and cooked. Men drank it freely, but as a rule after any work or after a meal they refreshed themselves with beer. Milk-pots were made either of wood or of clay and were shaped rather like those of Kitara. They were washed with water by the women, who also churned any milk they could spare, the butter being used for smearing on the body and on weapons.

#### AGRICULTURE

The people said that they brought millet and plantains with them when they came into the country, but they learned to grow and use other food by contact with neighbouring tribes.

Plantains were the most important crop. For many years Busoga was looked upon as the finest plantain-growing district

in the Uganda Protectorate. The groves extended without a break for many miles and supplied the people with abundant food. The men cleared the land, removing the trees and scrub, after which the women planted. The men also gave some assistance in the later work, such as pruning the trees, which, if properly attended to, would grow and bear freely for generations in the same place. The only instruments used in agriculture were the large knife for pruning the plantains, and the hoe.

The plantain was used both for food and for beer, the kind for beer being the "male," *mbide*, which was artificially ripened for the purpose.

The small millet (*bulo*) was the chief grain sown and it was used both for food and beer, though beer made from the large millet was preferred. A field was sown with millet for two or three seasons only and was then planted with sweet potatoes, while new land was found for the millet crop. The men cleared the land for the women, who then dug it and sowed the seed. Before sowing, however, both the land and the seed had to be blessed by a medicine-man, and while sowing the woman might not speak to anyone until she had finished. The fire which she took to the field to light her pipe was sacred, and no other person might take a light from it. There was no taboo on the woman while she was digging the field.

Two women, or sometimes a woman and her husband, sowed the seed. The husband went in front with his hoe, making holes about two inches deep, and the woman followed, dropping two seeds into each hole and pushing back the earth with her foot. If both the plants grew they were not thinned out, but were allowed to grow together. Sometimes four or five grains were planted in one hole, and as the millet grew it was thinned out by the men and the young plants were either cooked and eaten or replanted. The men often built huts in the fields and lived there to protect the crop from the ravages of wild animals, and they also helped at the time of harvest.

In some clans, the women would not allow anyone to eat



of the crop until their husbands had partaken of the first-fruits. In other clans there was no restriction as to this, while in others again, a woman took the first of the crop to her own father who ate it either raw or cooked, thus removing the restriction.

Millet, when used for beer, was roasted, ground, mixed with malt, and left for one night. The next day it was filtered, the malt being kept for use in the next brewing, and the liquid formed a slightly intoxicating drink, favoured because of the ease with which it was prepared.

Maize was grown in small plots and used as a luxury but never regarded as food for a meal. Sweet potatoes were cultivated in large quantities and were left in the ground until they were wanted for change of diet or to eke out the millet during the dry season. Beans were grown and, to a lesser extent, peas, which were eaten along with plantain. A little cotton was also grown.

The small oil-yielding plant semsem was grown by some of the more diligent women, whose husbands made the frame on which they dried it. If the husband himself was absent, he sent his representative to make this frame. The semsem was pounded to extract the oil and the pulp was made into cakes which were eaten with plantain in the place of meat. With this, as with other of the less important foods, it was not necessary that the husband should eat the first-fruits, but he had to eat some of the first ripe crop.

As a wife's part in the cultivation of food was so great, idleness or inability on her part was a common cause of strife between husband and wife, and bad cooking was also sufficient reason for a man to drive his wife away and send her back to her parents.

### Food

Another of the duties of a wife was to cook food, which she did twice daily, at noon and again in the evening, the latter being the chief meal. The food was cooked in one large pot, the different kinds being made into packets and placed on



green plantain fibre. A little water was added and the whole covered with leaves. A small fire would keep this food cooking and a child was left to watch the fire and keep it burning. If, however, a man wished to go on a journey and had to have a meal in a hurry, his wife cooked a little food in a small pot for him. If there were no guests, a man would eat with his wife, but if a guest appeared, the men ate together while the women and children ate apart from them.

Men might eat fowls and eggs but women were generally forbidden to do so. Women also avoided mutton, for they believed it would cause old age and decrepitude to come prematurely upon them; goat mutton, however, they ate freely. Various kinds of fish were common, but women were forbidden to eat them.

#### CLOTHING

The national dress was either bark-cloth or goat-skin, but most of the people preferred skins either of domestic or wild animals because of their durability and freedom from vermin, which increased rapidly in bark-cloth.

Bark-cloths, however, were still largely used, and were taken from the same trees and prepared by the same methods as in Buganda. A description of these methods will be found in my book *The Baganda*. After the bark-cloth had been beaten and dried, it was dipped in the boiling juice of the root of the *musasa* tree and then in a pool of black mud in a swamp. When dry this bark-cloth was quite black, which was a distinctive feature of the Busoga bark-cloths. Bark-cloth robes were worn by men like a mantle, tied up into a point at the back, while the women wrapped them round their bodies under their arms and wore a loin cloth as well. Bedding was always of bark-cloth.

Women wore necklets, bracelets, and anklets of brass, copper, or iron, which could be used for barter if necessary. They also sometimes cut scarifications, called *njalo*, on their bodies, but men never did so.

## BUILDING

The huts of the Basoga were bee-hive in shape, like a large inverted basket of reeds or elephant grass, supported on poles which were firmly imbedded in the ground. The huts were carefully finished and the floors were made of earth, smoothed and beaten hard, and smeared with black clay mixed with cow-dung, which gave a hard smooth surface.

There were a few taboos to be observed when building. When the man gathered the grass for the thatch, his wife might not come near it or see it until it was on the house. When the dwelling was ready, a girl was sent to bring fire from some house near. She entered the new house with this, and, having lit the central fire, she rushed out with the smoke clinging about her. This was supposed to make the smoke in future go out of the house and not hang about to stifle people. No food might be cooked in a new house nor might anyone live in it until the wife had visited her parents and brought from them a fowl which she cooked there.

A man sent for his friends to help him in the building, and other friends brought food which his wife cooked. The workmen were supplied with this food and beer, and the work might take as long as the man wished.

When people entered a new house, the husband went first with his shield and spear and placed them on the right side of the doorway. The woman then came, bringing with her semsem prepared for a meal. She sent for a neighbour, who carried in the stones on which the pots had to stand while cooking, and put them in their place.

Canoe-building was one of the important industries of Busoga, and at one time the Basoga canoes were the best and largest on Lake Victoria. I have described the method of building in *The Baganda*, p. 283.

There was a strong belief in tree-spirits and the spirits of large trees were especially feared. A man, therefore, could not cut down a tree to make a canoe until he had made an offering, which generally consisted of a goat or a sheep, while



Busoga hut



a string of cowry-shells was often tied round the trunk of the tree. When going to make the offering the man was accompanied by a priest, who went through a form of prayer or incantation, begging the spirit not to be annoyed and to allow the tree to be cut down and made into a canoe. As the spirit was supposed to accompany the boards which formed the canoe, offerings were made to it from time to time whenever a fishing expedition or a long journey was contemplated. When the canoe was finished beer and coffee-beans were put in it before it might be put into the water. Before launching, too, an offering of a fowl or a goat was made to the spirit and the blood was poured into the canoe at the bows.

#### OTHER INDUSTRIES

Smithing was seldom attempted, for all iron goods, spears, hoes, knives, etc., were purchased from the Bakitara, who brought them into the country and exchanged them for goats and sheep.

Pots were made by the women, who used the spiral method, that is, they made the soft clay into long rolls which they coiled round to form the sides of the pot, shaping it and smoothing it with the fingers and then with a piece of gourd shell. The pots were thick and heavy and little attempt was made to decorate or polish them. They had to be baked when the moon was increasing lest they should break. This was done in an open place where the fire could be kept up without fear of burning any house. Only light brush-wood could be used, for anything heavier would crush the pots.

#### AMUSEMENTS

Few games were indulged in, though at times men would meet together and feast and drink beer, after which they had a sham fight. These fights would sometimes become serious, for the men became too excited and clubbed and speared others as if they were really enemies.

The chief occasion for such feasts and games was when two neighbouring chiefs took an oath of friendship. A dog or a

goat was then taken to some place agreed upon, and the two chiefs held the animal, one by the front and the other by the hind legs, while the priest cut it in two with one stroke of a knife. The two parties then had a feast and some games before separating. At such times bull-fights were usual, the animals being incited to attack each other until one was gored or driven away.

The appearance of the new moon was a time of universal rejoicing, when people gathered together and dancing continued far into the night, with much beer-drinking. Men and women danced separately, the men on one side and the women on the other, and they danced either standing up or crouching as they preferred.

The Busoga bands were famed all over that part of the country and were even sent for by chiefs of Buganda to go and play on special occasions. They would go to the chief's residence and live there for about a week, playing daily for him. The bands consisted chiefly of wind instruments like trumpets, made of gourds or horns, some quite short and others from twenty to thirty inches long. Two or three drums to beat the rhythm and ten or twelve of these trumpets composed a band, and the men marched round the dancers as they played.

Harps, too, were sometimes used. A wooden bowl some ten inches long by eight wide and four deep formed the sounding board. This was covered with lizard-skin, and to it were attached two sides of a frame some fourteen to eighteen inches long. A cross-piece was fixed to the end of this frame and the strings were attached to pegs passing through the cross-piece so that they could be turned and the strings loosened or tightened for tuning.

### HUNTING

Busoga was not an elephant country, and it was only when herds passed through on their way from one grazing ground to another that a hunt was possible. Until recent years no value was placed on the ivory and hunting was only for the



sake of the meat, so that few men cared to run the risks attendant on the sport. Lately, however, the people have learned to place a value on ivory, and men have taken to hunting for the purpose of securing it.

The most common method of killing elephants was by spearing them from trees. The hunters climbed into trees along a path by which the animals went to the water. As an elephant passed under one of the trees the hunter hurled his spear down, aiming at its back between the shoulders. Another man then waved something to attract its attention and as it charged at him it had to pass under another tree, in which a man was concealed, and another spear was aimed at it. This was kept up until the elephant fell. Weighted spears were sometimes fixed in trees and a trap arranged so that the animal in passing under the tree released the spear, which fell on to its shoulders or back. Men had to lie in wait and follow the animal, which might die soon if the spear had been well placed, but might wander for days before it died or could be killed.

Another method was to dig a large pit and conceal it carefully. This was a safe method, for the animal, once it was in the pit, could easily be killed, but it was very difficult to conceal the pit in such a way that the elephant's suspicions would not be aroused.

One tusk of a slain elephant went to the chief hunter and the other to the man who first speared it. The Baganda and other traders who came into the country bought the tusks, giving in exchange brass, copper, iron, calico and prints.

One leg was given to the chief hunter and the rest of the meat was divided among all the men. The head was taken to the home of the chief hunter, who built a shrine to the ghost of his father, if he was dead, and offered the head to him, thanking him for his help and asking that he might have the good fortune to kill another. The heads of elephants and buffalo were the only parts of animals which were treated in this way. The chief hunter had to settle any disputes which arose among the men.

Buffalo were usually hunted with dogs, which kept an animal at bay while the hunters surrounded and speared it. Smaller game was hunted with nets which were used either to trap the animals or to stay them in a rush. The man who first struck an animal with his spear claimed both legs, one of which he had to give to his chief. The man who was second took a shoulder, and all the rest was divided up among the men who took part in the hunt.

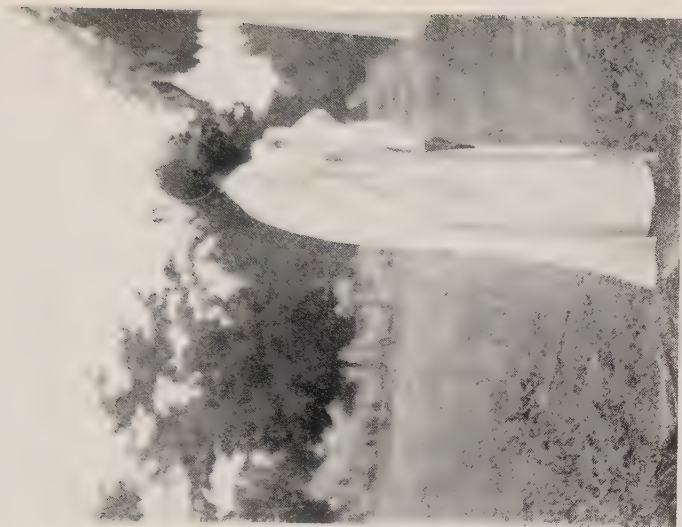
When a man was going to hunt he had to be careful that neither he nor his weapons came in contact with his wife or any other woman during the night before the hunt. He therefore took his spear with him and slept in the open. If on setting out in the morning he met a woman before meeting a man, he would turn back. Hunters had always to leave any dead animals on their path and follow up the living.

Most men kept dogs which were taught to hunt and were rewarded, after a kill, with the offal. At other times they were fed on potatoes and plantain mixed with milk. A dog with puppies was specially cared for and fed. Big puppies could be sold in the market for a goat apiece, but the smaller ones were given away to friends. It was believed that young puppies would open their eyes if a death was mentioned in their presence.

Along the Nile and on the lakes many men occupied themselves with fishing. Large baskets and intricate traps with an entrance which was almost invisible from the inside were used for deep water, while many men went out in canoes and fished with lines or nets. When a man was making a line or a net no woman might approach him. He lived apart from his wife and might not wash nor eat salt, butter, or fish until he had tested his net or line. If he caught no fish he took a cow and cast it into the lake as an offering. When he caught the first lot of fish with the new line or net he ate some of it as a sacred meal, sent some to his chief, and might sell the rest.

#### WARFARE

Warfare on even a moderate scale was scarcely known, but some fighting took place, generally as a result of some man's



Musoga, showing dent in forehead from a stone thrown in battle



encroaching on land of another clan. If he refused to retire, the drums were beaten for war, but the chiefs would attempt to settle the affair without recourse to arms and a boundary might be arranged. If arbitration failed, the fighting might last from one day to two months. Warriors carried two or three spears and a shield and slings for stones were also used. When one clan felt that it was getting the worse of the fight, three or four men would be sent to meet representatives of the stronger side and make a settlement. A boundary would then be fixed, and the warriors returned to their homes.

The dead were never mutilated, and a man who had killed an enemy was not separated from his fellows or regarded as in need of purification, but the members of his clan and his friends came to see him, bringing presents of sheep and fowls, and tied cowry-shells on his wrists.

A wounded warrior was nursed by some male relative. Some members of the tribe had attained to great surgical skill and treated wounds and broken bones with success. Wounds in the head from stones were common and the medicine-men were expert at removing the splinters of bone, after which the wound was dressed with pounded herbs.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### BIRTH, MARRIAGE, ILLNESS, AND DEATH

Importance of a son—care of a pregnant woman—birth—the after-birth—seclusion of mother and child—bringing-out and naming a child—cutting the first teeth—birth of twins—bringing-out and naming of twins—blessing from the new moon—cutting a child's hair and nails—training of boys and girls—extraction of teeth—taboos of a menstruating woman—polygamy—clan exogamy—forbidden relationships—arranging a marriage—divorce—adultery—fornication—causes of illness—death and burial of ordinary men—mourning—inheritance—death of great chiefs—temple of the chiefs—inheritance of chiefs—death of women—death by drowning

THE all-important object of every woman was to become a mother, especially of a son, for not only would she then be regarded with respect as having added another man to her



husband's clan, but she would have supplied her husband with someone who would care for his ghost when he had left this world. Whenever a woman, therefore, realised that she was pregnant she had to take many precautions lest by food, by some action, or even by hearing or seeing something, she might injure the life she was giving to her husband and his clan. Some female relative of the husband was appointed to see that the woman followed all the necessary rules and ate suitable food. Other women of the husband's clan might also take part in guarding the expectant mother, for it sometimes happened that a wife who had a grudge against her husband would seek to kill her child. Should she fail to do this before birth she would try to do it during birth by crushing or sitting upon the child, the crouching position adopted during delivery affording opportunity for doing this. Should she succeed in killing her child at birth, members of her husband's clan would flog and abuse her and would carry off the husband's goods, for they considered him responsible for his wife's action and said, "You have killed our child."

A woman during pregnancy had to be especially careful to avoid eating salt and beans, and cooked plantain might not be eaten hot but left until almost cold. No man might use the woman's seat or step over it, nor might she drink from a pot which a man had used. Members of her husband's clan might come to her house, but she avoided sexual intercourse with them. The husband, however, though he avoided his wife during her menses, might approach her while she was pregnant and also while she was nursing a child. When the time for birth drew near, the woman was careful not to go far from her house lest the child should be born in the field. This was especially to be avoided because if it happened that there were twins, they could not be moved after birth until a special medicine-man had been sent for and brought to the place.

When the birth took place three or four women of the husband's clan were present to assist. If it was during the day the woman went into the garden among the plantains, but if it was at night she remained in the house. The cord was



cut by a girl with a strip of reed fastened on a hoe handle, for the midwife might not cut it.

Should a child be born feet first, it was regarded as a serious matter and a medicine-man was consulted as to the medicine to be given to remove the evil, which, if left, might cause the death of the parents and bring all sorts of misfortune on the child. The Basoga declared that the Bakitara killed children born by feet presentation, but the Bakitara would not confess to this.

When a case was one of cross birth, a medicine-man was sent for and he and the midwife usually succeeded in turning the child. If, however, this was impossible, they would dismember the child and try to save the woman.

The midwife buried the after-birth by a plantain tree, covering it with bits of pot so that the earth could not touch it. The umbilical cord when it fell from the child was thrown at the root of a plantain tree where the dust from the house was also cast. The plantains from this tree were eaten by the woman and her husband during the period of seclusion which followed a birth, and no one else might partake of them.

After the birth, the mother was taken to her bed where she remained for four days. During this time a bright fire had to be kept up in the house and none of it might be taken out of the house until the child had been brought out for the inspection of the relatives. When the four days were ended, the woman was taken out to the back of the house where she was washed and shaved; while this was being done, the house was swept out and friends might look at the child, though they might not touch it.

The parents gave a child a name when it was born, but when it was four or five months old, the father brought his friends and made a feast, during which the mother's head was shaved. On the following day, the child was given a name by the father's parents and after that time people were allowed to touch it.

The cutting of a child's first teeth was anxiously watched, for in almost all clans it was considered dangerous if the upper

teeth appeared before the lower. Some clans, however, did not regard this omen. When the teeth appeared a feast was given by the parents, and the midwife then made the child sit upright, for until this time it had been kept lying on its back.

When a child's head was shaved for the first time it had to be done by the midwife, who received a bark-cloth as payment.

When twins were born, they might not be moved from the place of birth at once nor might the navel cords be severed. Their eyes, ears, and mouths were washed out and respiration set up, and the mother lay beside them and nursed them until a special medicine-man had been summoned. When he arrived, he gave his permission and the cord was cut. The afterbirths were put into earthen pots which were sealed with clay and buried in a heap of ashes near the house to keep them safe until the bringing out of the twins.

The midwife announced the birth to the father and the members of the clan, and a representative of the father was appointed to make arrangements. A hut was built or set apart for the mother and children, who remained in seclusion sometimes for two months and sometimes for as long as four months. The father had to inform his wife's parents of the birth, and during the seclusion he and his representative collected food for the feast which took place when the twins were brought out and shown to the relatives. The father was distinguished by wearing a circlet of cowry-shells on his head.

The cord of each child when it fell was wrapped in bark-cloth and shaped like a doll. When the child was nursed, the doll containing its cord was held to the breast as if it were also being fed. When the children were weaned the cords were preserved by the mother.

At the time appointed for the bringing-out of the children a large company of relatives came together in the evening and the father and mother of the twins shaved their heads, pared their nails and washed them. In some clans this purification was done in the early morning, which was the arrangement

common to most other tribes of this region. In some clans the hair and nails were kept for some time and were then taken as secretly as possible into the country of some other tribe and thrown away so that any evil from the twins and their birth might be deposited there. In some clans the hair and nails were simply thrown down in the house in which the mother lived and later were swept up with the dust from the house and thrown on an ant-hill.

During the night the relatives of the father and of the mother kept apart from each other, forming two camps, and danced and sang until early morning. Among some clans the mother and father came out of their house naked before sunrise and ran round the house in opposite directions, which was supposed to bring strength to the twins. The mother then ran into her house and the man who had been chosen as the father's representative in making the earlier arrangements was allowed to follow her, but a rope was tied to his leg and when he attempted to embrace her he was pulled back. Her husband had then to go in and have sexual relations with her to perfect the twins.

The pots containing the after-births were then taken with ceremony to the forest and left there, and on her return from this duty, the mother brought out the children, who were given presents of cowry-shells and were named by the father's mother. The names for twins were Waiswa and Nabiri if they were boy and girl; if both were boys the second was Tengwa, and if both were girls they were Wada and Nabiri. People always preferred to have one twin of each sex and should both be of the same sex, the parent whose sex was missing was derided.

While the twins were out the house was swept and the sweepings were taken and put on an ant-hill where, among some clans, the after-births were also deposited. After this there was general rejoicing, which lasted all day, and when it was over, the father and mother spent several weeks in paying visits and dancing. Their presence at this time was supposed to bring blessing to people, cattle, and crops, and

their visits were therefore welcomed. Special attention was paid by them to those people who had given presents of food for the bringing-out ceremony.

When a baby was about a month old, the mother took it out when the new moon appeared and tried to induce it to look up at the new moon, for she believed that this would bring it blessing and ensure satisfactory growth.

A woman who was nursing her child did not live apart from her husband, but should she conceive again she had to cease nursing and the child had either to have a foster mother or to be fed on artificial food.

When a mother had several miscarriages or her children died in infancy, she was given medicine, and the medicine-man also tried by augury to discover what ghost was causing their deaths and what it wanted. He then made offerings to appease it.

When a boy's hair required cutting, he went to some female relative of his father who shaved his head, gathered up the hair, took it to some place of safety, and hid it there. She also cut the boy's nails and hid them to prevent anyone from using them for magical purposes.

When a child began to walk a feast was made for which a goat was killed. One leg had to be given to the midwife.

At about the age of five a boy began to go out with the herdsmen of the goats and learn their work, and later he was sent to learn to herd the cows, after which he might hire himself out to some chief or cattle-owner. Boys were active and rejoiced in sham-fights and racing, while wrestling was also a favourite form of amusement. At about the age of five girls also were expected to begin to be useful and were taught by their mother to dig and to carry water and fire-wood.

When boys and girls reached puberty they had the four front teeth in the lower jaw extracted. Should one be afraid and refuse to have this done, he was called a Muganda and taunted with being like a dog. The extracted teeth were thrown away and not preserved.

As a boy grew up he built his own house near his parents

and lived there until he married. Sometimes several boys would live together in one hut. Unmarried girls remained with their parents and had a place curtained off where they slept.

When a girl first menstruated, she slept near her mother and avoided all men; even her father and brothers might not touch any of her things. At such a time a married woman must get some other person to peel her plantains for her; she might not eat in the presence of others nor might she prepare food for her husband, and he might not approach her.

### MARRIAGE

The Basoga were a polygamous tribe and the only limit to the number of wives a man might have was his ability to pay for them; polyandry, however, was forbidden. The clans were exogamous, but a man, though he avoided women from his own clan, might take several wives who belonged to the clan into which he married, indeed they might be sisters. In such a case, the wives, if they agreed, lived together in one house, but if they did not get on, the husband built them separate houses. As a rule each wife had her own house and her own field. The laws as to forbidden degrees of relationship were strict. First cousins and even second cousins were forbidden to marry and children of the same mother by different fathers were regarded as brothers and sisters and thus might not marry each other. A man generally married a second wife when his first proved to be sterile. He would, however, first procure from a local medicine-man some drug for her. If this did not act he would marry another woman, and the first wife, unless she had some hold on her husband's affections, became little more than a slave and was kept to dig and do rough work.

As a rule when a youth wished to marry, he got some friend or relative to go to the girl's parents and ask for their consent. He might, if he thought best, go himself to visit them and plead his cause. The parents then took counsel with some of their relatives, and should there be no objection to the youth, they settled the amount of the marriage-fee, which varied,



according to the position of the youth, from one to three cows. In some cases when the parents gave their consent to the marriage, the youth took two or three pots of beer, the drinking of which confirmed the agreement, and sometimes a feast was made and a goat was killed; this, however, seemed to be a custom introduced recently from other parts. A father might arrange a marriage for his son and pay the marriage-fee for him.

There were times when a young couple would agree between themselves that they would marry. The girl then escaped from her home and betook herself to the house of the youth's brother or of some friend, where he joined her and they lived together for some days. The girl's parents sought their daughter; but when she was discovered they did not punish her, but simply set to work to settle the amount of the marriage-fee, which would probably consist of two or three cows and two or three sheep or goats. The young husband might be given as much as six months to procure it, and during the time he lived with his wife. If at the end of that time he was unable to pay, he might be fined or his wife might be taken from him and held as a hostage to spur him on to greater diligence.

There was no ceremony about marriage, but the woman remained in seclusion for four days after she joined her husband, and he had to give her a bark-cloth, a hoe, and water- and cooking-pots as tokens of her position as mistress of his house. When her seclusion ended she went to see her parents, taking with her a bark-cloth and a goat for each, as presents from her husband. She remained with them two days and then returned to her husband bringing presents of food, probably a fowl or a goat, salt and semsem.

There was no taboo on seeing or speaking to relations-in-law. Unlike the custom in many parts of Uganda, a man might meet and speak to his mother-in-law freely and might even visit her, and a father-in-law might speak to his daughter-in-law and give her gifts.

If after marriage a woman failed to agree with her husband,



she might leave him and return to her people if they consented to return the marriage-fee, but otherwise she had no alternative but to remain with her husband. Divorce might take place at any time if the marriage-fee were restored, and the husband always kept possession of the children, who belonged to his clan. If a man found cause to blame his wife for idleness, he might beat her; and if she did not then improve he might sell her into slavery. A woman might call the witnesses of her marriage to help her if she felt herself wrongly punished, but she seldom obtained satisfaction by this method and as a rule bore her punishment in silence. A woman's father rarely interfered in the domestic disputes of his son-in-law's house except to insist upon his daughter's obeying her husband.

Adultery was generally punished by a fine. If a man found that his wife had committed adultery he endeavoured to find out the offender and accused him to a chief. The fine imposed usually consisted of a cow for the judge, a cow for the injured husband, and a goat for each assistant chief who took part in the trial. If, however, the husband actually caught another man with his wife, he might put him to death on the spot. If a man was convicted of adultery with the wife of a great chief, he was put to death.

If a girl had a child before she was married, her father brought the cause before the chief, who ordered the man who had seduced her to marry her, and to pay a fine equal to the amount of the marriage-fee and also a fine to those who tried the case. Should he refuse to marry the girl, she went to his home and was cared for by his mother until the child was born, when she returned to her own home. At times, however, severer punishment was meted out and both girl and man were driven from the clan, no fine or reparation of any kind being accepted. This was only done when it was believed that some ghost was offended by the act and was preparing to bring evil upon the clan.

#### ILLNESS

As with all these primitive peoples, serious illness and death were regarded as natural only when they came to old people;

if young persons fell ill and died some supernatural cause had to be discovered. If a man's illness, however, did not appear to be very serious, his wife and relatives would try what effect home treatment might have on him, and only when that failed would they send for a medicine-man, who was often also the head-man of the clan, to find by consulting his fetishes the cause of the illness and to direct the treatment. The medicine-man had to be paid with a fowl or a goat according to the circumstances of the patient. Illness might be caused either by magic worked by someone who had a grudge against the patient or by a ghost, either one belonging to the same clan as the patient, which used this means to call attention to some infringement of the clan rules, or one belonging to some hostile clan. It was also possible that illness might be caused by some god; and in that case, if the patient was a wealthy man, a cow was given to the god and the patient was smeared over with its dung to secure a blessing. In cases of smallpox the patient was isolated and someone who had had the disease nursed him and fed him, pricking the pustules and sponging away the pus.

### DEATH

When a man died, his wife and any relatives who might be present prepared the body for burial. The body was washed and laid out straight with the legs extended together and the arms lying along the sides, after which it was wrapped in bark-cloth and the face was washed and oiled. Burial took place on the same day as the death and the members of the clan gathered to assist in the ceremony and to choose the heir, which was done before the body might be buried. The heir came into the house and in the presence of the mourners rubbed butter or oil on the forehead and face of the dead man and covered it, after which he remained to be present at the burial. If the dead man was of importance, his grave was either dug in a house or a house was built over it, but ordinary men were buried outside their houses, in their gardens or fields. The grave was five or six feet deep and was lined with

bark-cloths, and the body was laid in it, a man on his right side and a woman on her left.

If there was any suspicion that the death had been caused by magic, the chief wife of the dead man caught a little of the earth that was first thrown into the grave, and made it into a ball which she threw over some tree near. This act freed the ghost of the dead man which might otherwise be held in bondage by the person who had caused the death. When the grave had been filled in all those present washed their hands beside it and threw the sponges on to the mound which was raised over it.

When the grave had been filled in, mourning commenced and continued for any length of time from four days to three months. During this time the men and women lived in different houses and remained strictly apart, even husbands and wives being separated, and they had to avoid any excesses either of food or drink lest the ghost should be annoyed and visit its wrath upon the culprit or some other member of his clan. Twice a day, at sunrise and at sunset, the mourners visited the grave and wailed and lamented. In order to keep up the wailing for some time they did it in relays, several at a time throwing themselves upon the grave and calling to the dead and weeping for him. When the sun had risen they returned to their houses and spent the day in talk. They might not wash or shave or cut their nails, and they wore wreaths of dry plantain fibre round their heads and girdles of the same round their loins. They watched each other, and should one commit any act which might annoy the ghost, he was tried and fined and the others fled from the place of mourning lest the ghost should wreak its vengeance on them. The ghost during this time was supposed to be in some tree near, where it was watching all that took place. When the mourning was over it retired to the uncultivated land, the home of the ghosts.

The heir supplied food for the mourners and beer for them to drink, and he decided when the mourning should cease, showing its termination by bringing a goat and a special pot of beer. Some of the beer was poured upon the grave and

the mourners ate the goat and drank beer. They then washed and shaved all the hair from their bodies, and the hair was taken and deposited in some neighbouring country. This had to be done secretly, for the hair was thought to bring death and if discovered would almost certainly lead to war. After the mourning the house in which the man died was deserted and allowed to fall to pieces.

When the mourning was over, the property of the dead man was divided. The heir was almost invariably the eldest son, though if he was absolutely unsuitable he might be passed over and another chosen. The heir, however, whoever he might be, only received a share, often less than a quarter, of the whole of the dead man's property, and one or two of the widows. The headman of the clan received a large portion and the other sons and daughters had to be supplied with something, the daughters' share being always meat or other food and never anything that could be kept and passed on, for no woman had the right to possess property nor could she hand any on to her children, who could inherit only from their father. The widows were divided, some going to the heir and some to other members of the clan. A widow might, if she so desired, return to her own family if they consented to return the marriage-fee which had originally been paid for her. The personal property of the dead man, that is, his water-pot and special food-pot, with his mats and bed, went to the heir.

The people bought slaves from surrounding tribes, a man being bought for one cow and a woman for two, and they passed on by inheritance like other property. Though the lot of these people was not hard and they were often treated like members of the family, a slave might not inherit property, even if his master gave him his freedom and adopted him as a son. If a male slave married, his children were always slaves, but the children of a female slave who married a free man belonged to her husband's clan and might inherit his property.

A man's grave was always covered with a mound of earth

beaten hard, which had to be kept in good repair as a shelter for the grave. At the head of this was built a shrine, which in the case of a peasant was a miniature hut only three feet high, but in the case of a chief might be a large house enclosing the grave. The ghost was supposed to visit this shrine, where offerings were made to it from time to time.

The procedure at the burial of a great chief was different from that at the burial of ordinary men and the lesser chiefs. The grave was not completely filled in, but a shaft was left reaching down to the head. Under the head also a space was left in which a basket was placed. A bell was attached to the head so that when it fell off the bell sounded, warning the men who guarded the tomb. These reported the fact and the jaw-bone was then taken up, cleaned, wrapped in the skin of a goat, decorated with beads, and put into a bag. This bag, in a wooden vessel, was placed in a hut or temple where a woman and some men chosen from the clan guarded it. When the jaw-bone of the next chief was brought to the hut, the woman guardian was given a goat or a sheep and left the place taking with her the jaw-bone she had guarded. She visited some house where she passed one night and on her departure left her bag with the jaw-bone in it behind her. The people, realising what it was, deposited it in some place where it would not be disturbed. In some tribes the whole skull of the chief was treated in this way, and when a new skull was brought, the former was taken to a place where it was customary to deposit them and left there without further attention.

The temple of the departed chiefs had, in addition to the woman guardian, priests who consulted the dead for information desired by the reigning chief. In return for this the reigning chief sent offerings of cattle and at times of girls, who became slaves of the temple and worked in the fields which belonged to it. In times of drought, offerings were made by the priests in the temple and they prayed for rain. The building of a new temple was always a time of rejoicing. In some parts of Busoga widows and slaves were buried with a chief, but as a rule the body was buried alone.



During the mourning for one of the great chiefs, the sub-chiefs lived in huts near the place of mourning and directed the affairs of the district. The heir of a great chief had always to be the eldest son whether he was the most suitable member of the family or not. When the mourning was ended, the heir brought a sheep and a cow and killed them with a spear, and the meat was distributed among the mourners. Messengers were then sent to the king of Kitara and to the king of Buganda to announce the death, and the appointment of the new chief. They took with them numbers of bark-cloths, and the king of Kitara in confirming the appointment sent presents of hoes.

A woman was always buried in the open and a hut was built over her grave, where she lay on her left side.

When a woman died in child-birth, her husband declared that she must have caused the mishap by unfaithfulness. Prolonged labour and cross-birth were also accounted for in this way. The woman's parents had to assist her husband to bury her and her relatives had to provide him with another wife for whom he gave a present of one cow. When a woman died in child-bed before the husband had paid the full marriage-fee for her, he had to pay the full fee for the new wife who was then provided for him by his deceased wife's relatives.

Rivers were not bridged; and as the usual way of crossing them was by jumping from root to root of the papyrus, there was a considerable amount of risk, for if a man slipped into the water, he was easily drawn under the roots and drowned. Very few men learnt to swim as their fear of the river-spirits made them avoid lakes and rivers except when obliged to cross them during a journey. When a man fell into a river and was drowned, his clan fellows, both male and female, came to the place. They offered a fowl to the river-spirit by throwing it alive into the river. Each drank a little water and, drawing some more, they cooked a meal on the river bank and ate it in the presence of the spirit. Not till then might they take the body from the water and bury it.



## APPENDIX

*Counting*

1. *ndala*, extend first finger.
2. *ebiri*, extend two fingers, first under second.
3. *esatu*, extend second, third, and fourth fingers, with first held down by third.
4. *ena*, extend four fingers, in two groups of two.
5. *etano*, extend closed fist.
6. *mukaga*, extend three fingers of each hand.
7. *musamvu*, extend four fingers on one hand and three on the other.
8. *munana*, extend four fingers on each hand.
9. *mwenda*, closed fist and extend four fingers of other hand.
10. *ekumi*, two closed fists.
20. *abiri*.

From 20 to 100 they used the Luganda words.

100. *kikumi*.  
 200. *bibiri*.  
 1000. *lukimi* and also the Luganda word.  
 10,000. *kakumi*.

*Seasons*

*Mutweigo* = March to September.  
*Musambya* = September to December.  
*Endwozi* = January to March.

In some parts the seasons are:

*Kaleminiri* = time for preparing land.  
*Kusiga* = time for sowing.  
*Kukola* = time when the crops grew.  
*Kulkul* = time for harvest and for rest.  
*Mwezi* = month of thirty days, or moon.

*Times of the day*

*Kibambya* = cock-crow.  
*Kyankyo* = sunrise.  
*Kanyuka* = time for women to rest.  
*Kafumbe omusana* = midday cooking, about 11 a.m.  
*Bakalia musana* = eating at noon.  
*Bawate egulo* = time for evening cooking.  
*Balye ekiro* = evening meal, at sunset.  
*Nkoko ziingire* = fowls go to roost.  
*Buire* = night or midnight.

### Currency

Five cows bought a wife.  
 Thirty goats bought a cow.  
 Fifty fowls bought a goat.

### Salutations

*Kojea* or *Kodeo*? (pronounced with a slight lisp)=Are you all well?  
 Answer, *Balio*=All are well.  
*Balio*?=Are all well? Answer, *Balio*=All are well.  
*Agufayo*?=In your home is all well? Answer, *Tulio*=We are well.

### Relationships

*Father*, *lata*, *aifwe* or *wange*.

*Mother*, *mama*.

*Brother*, *muganda*.

*Sister*, *mwanyina*.

*Husband*, *ba*.

*Wife*, *mukazi*.

*Son*, *mwana* or *mutabani*.

*Daughter*, *mwala*.

*Father's mother*, *jaja*.

*Father's father*, *musange*.

*Mother's father*, *musange*.

*Mother's mother*, *jaja*.

*Father's brother*, *lata muto*.

*Father's sister*, *songa*.

*Mother's brother*, *jaja*.

*Mother's sister*, *makaisi wange kaidi*.

*Father's brother's wife*, *mukaisi wange*.

*Father's sister's husband*, *lata*.

*Mother's brother's wife*, *mukazi wange (my wife)*, denotes possibility of marriage.

*Mother's sister's husband*, *lata*.

*Father's brother's son*, *muganda*.

*Father's brother's daughter*, *mwanyoko*.

*Father's sister's son*, *muganda*.

*Father's sister's daughter*, *mwanyina*.

*Mother's brother's son*, *jaja*.

*Mother's brother's daughter*, *mukaisi wange*.

*Mother's sister's son*, *muganda*.

*Mother's sister's daughter*, *mwanyina*.

*Son's son*, *musangi*.

*Son's daughter*, *mukazi wange (my wife)*.

*Daughter's son*, *musangi*.

*Daughter's daughter*, *mukazi (wife)*.

*Brother's son*, *mutabani*.

*Brother's daughter*, *muwala wange*.

*Sister's son*, *muganda*.

*Sister's daughter*, *mwanyoko*.

*Wife's father*, *muko*.

*Wife's mother*, *muko*.

*Wife's brother*, *muko*.

*Wife's sister*, *mukazi*.

*Wife's sister's husband*, *musangi*.

*Husband's father*, *nyazala*.

*Husband's mother*, *jajawao*.

*Husband's brother*, *muganda*.

*Husband's sister*, *mwala*.

*Husband's brother's wife*, *mukamuganda mulamu*.

*Son's wife*, *muka mwana*.

*Daughter's husband*, *muko*.

## Vocabulary

*All*, bona  
*arm*, mukono  
*arrow*, miti  
*Back*, mugongo  
*bad*, kibi (*ugly*)  
*be (to)*, kinabawo  
*beast*, nsolo  
*beautiful*, kirungi (*good*)  
*believe*, kukurizi  
*bird*, noni  
*bitter*, kika  
*black*, kidugavu (*dark*)  
*blood*, musai  
*boat*, lwato  
*body*, mbiri  
*bone*, egumba  
*born (be)*, azaire  
*bow*, buta  
*breath*, muka  
*bright*, kitangala  
*burn*, kuwokya  
*Carry*, tuike  
*chief*, mwami  
*child*, mwana  
*cloud*, kiri  
*club*, mwigo  
*come*, idya  
*command*, kulagira  
*cut*, kusala  
*Dance*, kina  
*dark*, kidugavu (*black*)  
*day*, kasana  
*die*, afire  
*do*, kola  
*dream*, kulota  
*drink*, anyuwa  
*Ear*, kutu  
*earth*, etaka  
*eat*, alya  
*enemy*, antazi  
*False*, mukobi  
*fear*, bukyere

*few*, batone  
*fight*, kulwana  
*fire*, muliro  
*fish*, byakulira ebyenyanza  
*food*, matoke  
*foolish*, musiru  
*foot*, kigere  
*forest*, kibira  
*friend*, mugonzi  
*Ghost*, muzimu  
*give*, kuwa, kumuwa  
*go*, golola  
*god*, lubare  
*good*, kirungi (*beautiful*)  
*green*, kiragala  
*Hair*, muviri  
*hand*, kifunsi  
*hard*, kikebangofu  
*hate*, kutala  
*he*, oyo  
*head*, mutwe  
*hear*, wulira  
*heart*, moyo  
*heavy*, kizito  
*high*, walieri  
*house*, endyu  
*I*, nze  
*it*, ekyo  
*kill*, kuita  
*Know*, kutegera  
*Large*, kinene  
*leg*, mugulu  
*lie*, galamirira (*to lie down*)  
*light*, kyangu  
*lightning*, lukuba  
*live*, mulamu  
*liver*, mani  
*long*, kirei  
*loud*, mwogezi  
*love*, yagala  
*low*, wansi

*Man*, musaiju  
*many*, bange  
*marry*, kubaiza  
*mountain*, lusozi  
*mouth*, munywa  
*moon*, mwezi

*Neck*, nkoto  
*new*, luwiya  
*night*, buiri  
*nose*, nyindo

*Old*, mukaire

*Part*, kitundu  
*priest*, mulaguzi

*Quick*, mangu

*Rain*, madi  
*red*, kikunyukunyu  
*river*, mwiga  
*run*, lumukaku

*Shadow*, mpombia  
*she*, oyo

*sea*, nanza  
*see*, ku-moga  
*shield*, ngabo  
*short*, kimpí  
*shoulder*, ebega  
*sing*, yasubaga  
*sit*, tyama  
*skin*, luwo  
*sky*, waigulu  
*sleep*, kutenduka  
*slow*, kugayazi  
*small*, katona  
*smell*, myuka  
*soft*, kiwolu  
*sorcerer*, muyiga  
*soul*, moyo  
*speak*, yogera  
*spear*, efumu

*stand*, imirira  
*star*, munyenyi  
*stone*, ibare  
*strike*, kukuba  
*sun*, kasana  
*sweet*, kirungi kiwoma

*Take*, tola  
*taste*, gezako  
*tell*, kukobera  
*that*, ekyo  
*they*, bo  
*thing*, kantu  
*think*, kulooza  
*this*, kino  
*thou*, iwe  
*thunder*, lukuba  
*tongue*, lulimi  
*tooth*, maino  
*touch*, gemako  
*tree*, muti  
*true*, wamazima  
*to be*, kinabawo

*Ugly*, kibi (*bad*)

*Walk*, tambula  
*war*, lutalo  
*water*, madi  
*we*, ifwe  
*which*, ki  
*white*, jeru  
*who*, bani  
*whole*, byona  
*wind*, mpewo  
*wise*, magezi  
*wish*, kwagala  
*woman*, mukazi  
*word*, kigambo

*Yellow*, kivuvu  
*you*, mwe  
*young*, muto



Man of the Bakonjo, a cannibal tribe of Ruwenzori





Man of the Bakonjo tribe

# THE BAKONJO

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE PEOPLE

The country and the people—clans and totems—villages—government—agriculture—millet—other crops—domestic animals—cannibalism and hunting for meat—fishing—warfare—counting

THE Bakonjo were a small tribe inhabiting the eastern slopes of Mount Ruwenzori, or, as the natives of the region frequently call it, Luenzori<sup>1</sup>. The tribe seemed to be native to that region and numbered only a few hundreds. In appearance they were short and sturdy but of a low and degraded type of countenance. They were to be found generally on the upper plateaux of the mountain, where they made small clearings in the scrub, built huts, and grew their crops.

They were a totemic tribe, divided into a number of clans which followed the usual custom of clan exogamy. There is little doubt that each clan had a secondary as well as a primary totem, but during the short visit of the expedition to that region, it was not possible to discover it. The names of the clans with their primary totems were:

Baswaga,	totem	<i>njoju</i> ,	elephant
Ahera,	„	<i>ngabi</i> ,	antelope
Abaswi,	„	<i>ekisuba</i> ,	heron
Abakira,	„	<i>mpunu</i> ,	pig
Abahambo,	„	<i>nseri</i> ,	crocodile
Abasukari,	„	<i>mbogo</i> ,	buffalo

The clans did not live apart but intermingled, forming villages of from three to twelve huts. When a man married and felt that he required more room, he left his own village

<sup>1</sup> The snow-capped peak is called *Mbalagala*, shining hill, and this name is more generally known to the inhabitants than Ruwenzori.

and made a new clearing where he built his hut and settled. Other men joined him, and in a few years his settlement might have become a village of some eight to a dozen huts. The man who first settled in a place generally became the head-man of the village, and to him matters of local disputes and questions of land were referred, and he acted as the mediator between the other members of the community and the superior chiefs of the clans and tribe. Anyone who wished to cultivate a new plot of land had to get the permission of the head-man of his village.

The people grew enough millet to keep them in food, and they also kept a few goats and sheep for the purpose of barter and the purchase of wives. The animals were of a poor breed and little or no attempt was made to improve them. People aimed at increasing the number of their animals but cared nothing for their quality.

#### AGRICULTURE

The tribe was purely agricultural and their staple food was the small millet, *bulo*. This kind grew more easily upon the ridges of the mountain and required a shorter period to ripen than the larger kinds of millet.

Both men and women worked in the fields, though women claimed the plots as theirs and were responsible for them and for the supply of food for the household.

When new land had to be re-claimed from the wild, the man had the first of the work, felling trees and shrubs, cutting down the coarse grass, and burning them. He might then help with the digging if time pressed, but this was generally done by the woman, who used a short hoe. When a field was dug for the first time they did not go deeper than about six inches, but the second year and afterwards it was necessary to dig to a depth of some twelve inches. There was no knowledge of manuring or of rotation of crops, and when land had been under cultivation some years and showed signs of being exhausted, it might be left to run wild again while new land was used. Land was plentiful, and all a man had to do was

to get the permission of the head-man of the village to break up new ground. The old plot remained the property of its original owner, who would return to it after a few years.

Millet was sown soon after the beginning of the rains. The land was dug as soon as the sky began to show signs of the coming of rain, so that when the rain began it was ready for sowing. September and October were the months for sowing, and the millet was ripe by the end of January. While ripening it had to be guarded against wild animals and birds, and scare-crows and rattles were used to protect it. It was often necessary to build huts in the fields and remain there by night to keep off the pigs, which might destroy the crop.

When ripe the millet was cut and beaten from the husk with short sticks, after which it was winnowed by being poured from a basket held at a height of some four to five feet. It was stored in granaries made like large baskets and resting on stones or stakes. The lids of the baskets were thatched, and projected on all sides to keep off rain. Each wife had her own granary near her house, from which she took grain as she required it. The millet was ground with a small stone on a flat slab of stone some two feet long and eighteen inches wide. This was tilted, and at the lower end a basket was placed to catch the flour as it was ground and allowed to slip down the stone slab. From this coarse meal a kind of porridge was made.

Maize was grown to some extent, and those who planted it got their crops in November, for it was used while still young and tender. Potatoes when once planted bore nearly the whole year, though during the dry season they were tough and stringy. Beans were freely grown, and were never eaten young, but always dried and stored for use during the dry season when crops could not be grown.

Men and women as a rule ate apart, and a woman and her children generally had their meal after the husband had finished.

#### DOMESTIC ANIMALS

Goats were the animals most frequently kept, for they throve on the high places of the mountain, but they were

not of a fine kind. Both men and women ate goat flesh freely. The goats from two or more villages were taken out to pasture together, and were herded generally by boys and girls, though the latter only did this work if there were no sons in the family and until they were old enough to dig.

Sheep were not so commonly kept. They were of a small kind and did not seem to thrive on the mountain herbage. Women had various taboos which often prevented their eating mutton. The chief use of goats and sheep was to pay the marriage-fee to the parents and relatives for a wife.

A small kind of fowl was kept, but they were not cared for nor fed and had to fend for themselves, so that they often fell a prey to birds and wild animals and did not increase rapidly in number. Fowls were often eaten and might be exchanged for goats, but they were mostly used for the taking of auguries and for offerings to ghosts. Eggs were eaten on rare occasions and were more frequently left for the hens to hatch.

Most men possessed dogs which they fed sparingly and which acted as the village scavengers. A woman had to be most careful not to injure her husband's dog, for that would bring evil. If a dog had puppies it had to be fed and more carefully looked after.

### HUNTING

In the past I found these people much addicted to cannibalism; and though they asserted that they buried their dead, there is reason to believe that they ate them, but these things have now to be kept secret. Most of their meat was obtained from hunting, and they would eat almost any kind of animal, even rats, wild cats, and leopards. They hunted with nets or traps, though at times they would surround an animal and hunt it from side to side until it was exhausted, when it was speared or clubbed. The owners of dogs took them with them to assist in the hunt.

The dwellers near the rivers or on Lake Albert caught fish, which they ate either fresh or dried.

## WARFARE

The Bakonjo were not a warlike people, and were for many years the vassals of the Banyoro, who treated them as slaves. Now and again they rebelled against their masters and fled to the higher forests on Ruwenzori, but after a time they returned and submitted again.

When they had to fight they carried leaf-bladed spears and small oval shields of wicker-work. When a village was suddenly attacked by an enemy, they would use ivory horns to sound the alarm, and call to their assistance the inhabitants of neighbouring villages.

*Counting*

1. *Embe*, index-finger extended.
2. *Biri*, two first fingers extended while third and fourth were bent inwards.
3. *Satu*, the index-finger bent in while the three others were extended.
4. *Ena*, four fingers extended and thumb bent in.
5. *Etano*, index-finger placed under the thumb.
6. *Endatu*, index-finger on each hand placed under thumbs.
7. *Ebisinda*, four fingers on right hand extended while on left the index-finger was bent under the thumb.
8. *Munane*, all four fingers extended on each hand.
9. *Mwenda*, right hand laid upon the fist of left hand, while the fingers were extended.
10. *Kumi*, the two fists placed together.
20. *Amaku abiri*.
30. *Asatu*.
50. *Endata*.
70. *Abena*.
100. *Enjana*.

## CHAPTER XX

## BIRTH, MARRIAGE, ILLNESS, AND DEATH

Care of a pregnant woman—birth—seclusion and purification—making a child sit up—cutting teeth—training of children—clothing—clan exogamy—arranging marriage—marriage ceremonies—treatment of illness—death and burial—mourning—inheritance—ghosts and spirits

A WIFE, realising that her strongest claim to her husband's esteem lay in bearing him children, made known the fact as soon as she realised that she had conceived; and her mother,



or, more often, her husband's mother, came to look after her until the child was born. The duty of the woman in charge was to see that the prospective mother took the medicine which was considered necessary and did everything possible to ensure the birth of a healthy child.

One or two women came in to assist at the actual birth, which took place in the house, the mother crouching on grass laid down near the central post. When the child was born, the midwife cut the cord with a strip of reed and the child was handed to an assistant who washed its face, cleaned its eyes and mouth and started respiration. The midwife attended the mother until the afterbirth came, when it was buried outside the house near the door.

If the baby was a boy the mother remained in seclusion for four days, and if it was a girl for three. During this time the husband was the only man who might enter the house, though women might come to visit the mother. On the fourth day, the woman's head was shaved and she was washed; the house was swept out and new grass laid on the floor. When this purification was over, friends might come in freely to see the mother and child.

The midwife, generally the husband's mother, then went home for three months, and until she returned the child was kept as much as possible lying on its back. After three months she returned, and made the child sit up on the floor. A feast was made for the relatives to celebrate this step in the child's progress.

The cutting of a child's first teeth was anxiously watched, for should the teeth in the upper jaw appear first, offerings had to be made to the gods to avert evil. A child which cut the upper teeth first was called *Kitenda* and offerings were made to the gods to remove their displeasure, lest evil should ensue. When all went well and the lower teeth appeared first, relatives came to congratulate the parents, and the father killed a goat and made a feast.

A child was always nursed by its mother for fully three years, and during this time the mother avoided sexual relations with all men.

At an early age a boy went out with the goat-herds, and soon learned to do this work himself. Later he had to learn to build and to hunt, and by degrees took his place as a man of the clan. Girls were expected to help with domestic duties and were first given the task of keeping the fire burning under the cooking-pot. Then they carried water and fire-wood and later were taught to dig and to take their part in the other duties of daily life.

Children wore no clothing nor did they trouble about washing. When a girl showed signs of maturing, she wore a small bit of goat-skin as an apron, and that was all that was considered necessary until she married.

### MARRIAGE

The rules of clan exogamy were strictly observed and the marriage of near relations was avoided. There were no restrictions as to the number of wives a man might have, but as a rule men were too indolent to procure the wealth necessary to purchase more than one.

When a youth desired to marry, he would confide in his parents or in some friend. The youth would probably know of some girl whom he wished to marry, and his confidant went to see the parents and ask them to agree to the marriage. If the union was not forbidden by the laws of relationship and clan exogamy, the parents seldom made any objection, and the messenger returned to the youth, who had then to prepare two pots of beer. This he took to the parents of his bride and both father and mother generally collected some of their relatives, so that two pots of beer, each containing some two gallons, were necessary. The drinking of this beer formed the pledge of both parties to the engagement, and at this meeting the amount of the marriage-fee, which was reckoned in goats and varied from five to twenty-five, was settled.

When the marriage-fee had been paid, the woman was sent to her husband without any further ceremony, and on her arrival she remained in seclusion for two days before taking up her ordinary duties. When she had been with her husband

for two months she returned to her parents and spent one or two days with them. When she left to go back to her husband, her parents gave her some uncooked food of every kind they grew. This food was carried for her by some friends; and on her arrival at her husband's house she cooked it and made a feast, as a sign of her contentment with her marriage and her ability as a cook. Should a wife be unhappy with her husband she did not return to him after going to her parents, and the marriage-fee had to be repaid.

### ILLNESS

In cases of slight complaints such as colds and fever, a wife would treat her husband or a husband his wife without appealing to the medicine-man, but when an illness appeared to be more serious the medicine-man was sent for. His first step was always to find out by augury the cause of the illness, for until that had been ascertained it was of no use to apply remedies. A fowl was generally used for the augury; the head was cut off and the flow of blood noted, or at times the head was cut off sharply and the headless fowl allowed to run about, the way in which it ran and fell in death being noted. After death the lungs and intestines were examined.

When magic was found to be the cause of the illness, it had to be overcome by stronger magic; but when the cause was a ghost which had to be propitiated, a fowl was cooked and offered to it. When the cause had thus been dealt with, the patient was treated according to the symptoms of his disease, bleeding being the favourite treatment for almost every trouble. The medicine-men were acquainted with many herbs which they employed in treating their patients.

### DEATH

When death occurred, the first step was to place the body in the correct position for burial, and in many cases the attendants did not wait until the man was actually dead to do this. When they saw that he was dying, they would bend up his legs and cross his arms in front of him so that he might die

in that position. After death, however, the arms were bent up and the hands placed under the right side of the head for a man and under the left side for a woman. All ornaments were removed from the body, which was wrapped in bark-cloth. The grave was dug by relatives and friends in the ground near the hut, and a layer of grass placed in it. The body was laid on this on its right side if it was a man and on its left if it was a woman, and covered with grass before the grave was filled in. Those who took part in the funeral then washed their hands and faces, shaved their heads, and cut their nails at the grave, and poured the water they had used upon it.

Mourning went on from the time of burial for some two months, but if the dead man was an important member of the clan it might last for as long as six months. The mourners were supplied with cooked food and beer by friends, and they danced, drank beer, and wailed. During mourning they might not wash or shave or cut their nails.

The heir, who was the son of the dead man, ended the mourning by bringing a goat to the grave, where he killed it, and the mourner ate it as a sacred meal in the presence of the ghost. The mourners shaved their heads, eyebrows and bodies of all hair, pared their nails and washed; the hair and nail parings were placed on the grave and the water was poured over it. When the mourning was ended, the house in which the man died was deserted and pulled down, and the materials used for building elsewhere.

The widows became the property of the heir, but were free to return to their own homes if their relatives would refund the marriage-fee which had been paid for them.

### GHOSTS AND SPIRITS

After the death of a man, the ghost was supposed to reside in the house, and the occupants, whether the man's widows or his heir, placed food near the main post for the ghost's use. Shrines were not built to ghosts, but fowls were sometimes offered to them in the house by the relatives. Children were

named after departed ancestors so that the ghosts might care for and help them, and protect them against other ghosts and against magic.

Little was known about other kinds of spirits, but certain places in rivers where there was a swift current were feared because of the water-spirit in them which occasionally destroyed people.

A man who was found making magic was fined the value of a woman because his deeds were dangerous to the community; he might pay the injured party the value of a woman in cattle or purchase one and pass her on to them.



Man of the Bambwa, a cannibal tribe of Mount Ruwenzori





Man of the Bambwa tribe

# THE BAMBWA

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE PEOPLE AND THEIR OCCUPATIONS

Subservience of the Bambwa—cannibalism—clans and totems—government and the land—religion—agriculture—domestic animals—artisans—fighting—hunting—food—seasons—counting

THE Bambwa were a mountain tribe living on the western slopes of the Ruwenzori range. They were a turbulent people and were never completely subdued, though in the past they were regarded as free-men under the king of Kitara. Their subservience, however, though nominally the head-man of a clan was accountable to his over-lord, only meant that from time to time small presents and submissive messages were sent to Kitara or sometimes to Toro.

Neighbouring tribes declared that the Bambwa were cannibals; and though the people themselves denied this, the evidence pointed to the truth of the assertion. In fact when I visited the western slopes of the mountain some twenty-two years ago, I found them actually using human flesh. They were also in the habit of filing their teeth to points, which was said by their neighbours to be a sign of cannibalism.

The tribe was divided into a number of totemic clans which in most cases seemed to use the name of their totem as the name of their clan:

- |                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. <i>Engo</i> , leopard.         | 11. <i>Njaza</i> , antelope. |
| 2. <i>Nkende</i> , a kind of cat. | 12. <i>Njojo</i> , elephant. |
| 3. <i>Ngeye</i> .                 | 13. <i>Nsumba</i> , cat.     |
| 4. <i>Nko</i> , a cat.            | 14. <i>Musu</i> , rat.       |
| 5. <i>Nsugu</i> .                 | 15. <i>Omwaga</i> .          |
| 6. <i>Ntale</i> , lion.           | 16. <i>Mbuku</i> .           |
| 7. <i>Mpuru</i> , pig.            | 17. <i>Kapude</i> .          |
| 8. <i>Nsenge</i> .                | 18. <i>Kabebe</i> .          |
| 9. <i>Mbogo</i> , hippopotamus.   | 19. <i>Kakereme</i> .        |
| 10. <i>Mpara</i> , red buck.      | 20. <i>Kigasi</i> , monkey.  |

Clan exogamy was practised, no man being permitted to marry a woman whose totem was the same as his own.

#### GOVERNMENT

Each clan had its own head-man, who not only settled the affairs of his clan but acted as intermediary when negotiations with the over-lord in Kitara or Toro were necessary. The members of a clan usually dwelt together, forming a small village, and all disputes were brought to the head-man. He had power to imprison men for refusing to perform some duty or to pay some fine which was demanded of them; but this was rarely done, and his principal task was that of judging questions of the possession of land.

Though land which had never been cultivated was free to all, a piece of land which had been dug and had been allowed to return to its wild state, still belonged either to the man who had originally planted it or to some member of his family; if anyone took possession of such land, objections might be raised by the real owner and the head-man had to intervene. Unless the usurper quitted the plot or the matter was satisfactorily arranged, quarrels and bloodshed would certainly ensue. When a man wanted help in a matter of this kind or permission to occupy certain land, he paid the head-man four or five goats, and in return a field and a site for his house were granted to him.

Matters of debt, generally in regard to the payment of marriage-fees, had also to be brought before the head-man of the clan or village.

#### RELIGION

The Bambwa acknowledged the existence of a creator, but paid him no worship and made him no offerings. The only supernatural beings which were regarded as having any real influence on their lives were the spirits of the dead, which became ghosts and had occasionally to be propitiated with offerings. After death ghosts of both men and women returned to their own clans, those of women who had married returning to their original homes and not to the clans of their husbands.

Ghosts were always careful to promote the welfare of their own clans, but would cause illness or trouble among the members if they had been in any way offended or neglected. Illness or death might, however, be caused by a ghost of another clan which had been influenced by an enemy of the person affected. It was therefore necessary in a case of illness to send for the medicine-man to discover by augury what ghost was responsible and what method should be used to deal with it. The methods generally adopted will be described in the section on Illness (p. 153). The medicine-man had to be paid for his services from one to five fowls or a goat, according to the wealth of the patient.

Children were called by the names of their ancestors because the ghosts became their guardians, those of men looking after boys and those of women after girls.

### OCCUPATIONS

The Bambwa were an agricultural tribe, and, as usual, the main work of cultivation was done by the women, though the men cleared new ground of trees, shrubs and rough grass, digging up the tree roots and burning all the rubbish. The women went over the ground with their hoes, digging some ten to twelve inches deep and raking the earth towards them, picking out from it the roots of weeds and grass which would grow again if buried; these were burned with the other rubbish.

The small millet, *bulo*, was the principal food, and was stored in basket granaries raised on three stumps of trees so that a clear space of some two feet was left underneath. A conical lid with a layer of thatch and a smearing of cow-dung inside protected the granary against rain.

Sweet potatoes, beans, peas, and marrows were also grown, and of recent years plantains have been largely cultivated on the lower mountain slopes.

Goats and sheep were fairly plentiful and fowls were kept, for the people ate both fowls and eggs. Most men kept dogs which they trained to help in the hunt. Women had trouble in keeping the dogs from stealing food, but they had to be

careful in their treatment of them, for if a woman killed a dog, her husband would divorce her and demand the return of the marriage-fee from her family. When a dog had puppies the owner fed it with the best food he could procure, for puppies were of value and one might be exchanged for a fowl. If the death of any person were mentioned in the hearing of a new litter of puppies, it was believed that they would at once open their eyes.

There were a few smiths in the tribe, but their workmanship was poor and showed no sign of skill nor any evidence of artistic taste. They had crude methods of smelting, and worked the metal up into spears, hoes, knives and other implements. Carpenters made rough stools and vessels, and pots were made by the women, though the men brought clay to them from the swamps in the lower parts of the valleys.

It was evident, from the precautions taken to secrete food and their preparedness for hurried flights up the mountain, that they were little accustomed to fighting. Their weapons were bows and arrows, spears, and shields. There was no order in their battle array, and their methods of attack were individual and extremely primitive.

Hunting was of importance, for the people would eat almost any kind of bird, beast, or reptile. Dogs were used in the hunt, and the bones, entrails, and offal of the animals killed were given to them, the dog which had been of most use receiving an extra share of the food. Fish were caught in the rivers and were an important item in the diet. Some were dried and smoked, but as a rule they were eaten fresh.

Men and women never ate together. Food was usually eaten in company, the men and the women of a village collecting in separate places for their meals.

#### SEASONS

They had no means of fixing the beginning of the year, which might be earlier or later, being reckoned from the commencement of the rains. The year fell thus into two parts, drought and rains:

*Manya gwira* or *kyanda*, drought and sun  
*Ndula soki*, rain.



The year consisted of about six months, though the two rainy seasons were distinguished, the greater rains being the time for sowing the principal crops and the lesser rains the time for sowing those of quick growth.

The next division was marked by the new moon, and each new moon was greeted with songs and dancing. At the time of new moon the potters, who were almost always women, did not make any pots. No special superstitions were attached to the waning moon.

### COUNTING

1. *Moti*, the index-finger extended.
  2. *Bota*, two fingers extended.
  3. *Salu*, index-finger bent in and three fingers extended.
  4. *Ena*, four fingers extended in open formation.
  5. *Tano*, hand closed over thumb.
  6. *Nkaga*, second, third, and fourth fingers of each hand extended, index-fingers held under thumbs.
  7. *Musanvu*, four fingers of right hand extended and laid on three of left, which has the index-finger bent inwards under the thumb.
  8. *Nane*, four fingers on right hand extended and laid on four of left hand also extended.
  9. *Sobi*, right hand laid flat on the inside of extended left hand, one thumb extended.
  10. *Kumi*, the thumbs of both hands laid along the index-fingers and the hands clapped together, making a hollow sound.
- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 20. <i>Mwe simoti.</i> | 70. <i>Bwe sanvu.</i> |
| 30. <i>Bwe salu.</i>   | 80. <i>Bwe nane.</i>  |
| 40. <i>Bwe ena.</i>    | 90. <i>Bwe sobi.</i>  |
| 50. <i>Bwe tano.</i>   | 100. <i>Bwe kumi.</i> |
| 60. <i>Bwe kaga.</i>   |                       |

## CHAPTER XXII

### BIRTH, MARRIAGE, ILLNESS, AND DEATH

Birth of a child—seclusion—making a child sit up—birth of twins—training children—exogamy and polygamy—obtaining wives—the marriage-fee—treatment of illness due to ghosts—death and burial—mourning—murder

A WOMAN never hid her condition when she expected a child, for it was a matter for general rejoicing among her husband's clan-fellows and relatives. There were no special taboos to be



observed by a pregnant woman and she was at liberty to eat or to refuse different kinds of food as she wished. Her mother came to care for her and acted as midwife at the birth, which took place in the hut, the woman crouching beside one of the posts and supported by a friend.

If the child was a boy the navel cord was cut with an arrow, while if it was a girl, a strip of reed was used. The after-birth was buried in the house near the door and the mother remained four days in seclusion. At the end of the four days she was washed and shaved, after which she might do her household work such as cooking and bringing fire-wood and water, but she might not go to dig in her field for a month. Her husband, however, went about his usual work during the whole of the time.

When the stump of cord fell from the child, the mother shaved the child's head and buried the hair with the cord in the house. A fowl was killed and eaten to mark this ceremony.

At the end of a month, if the child was a boy, the father made it sit up on a little cut grass laid on the floor; if it was a girl the mother did this. The father's father named a boy and the father's mother a girl. The mother continued to nurse the child for some two years or until she found that she had conceived again, after which she might not nurse it any longer.

Twins were sacred, and when a woman bore them she was secluded from all people. The father's mother was sent for to cut the cords, and the women who were helping in the house had to be careful not to quarrel with each other. A fence was built round the house and only the husband and the midwife might enter. For about four months the mother remained in seclusion.

After the birth of twins a medicine-man was sent for and was given a goat, which he killed, sprinkling the family and any friends who had gathered for the occasion with the blood and making a feast of the meat. For four days dancing went on and drums were beaten day and night. The husband had to see that the people were kept supplied with food and beer, which he collected from his relatives. During all this time he had

to be careful not to quarrel with anyone or to lose his temper, for that would be harmful to the twins. After four months the mother might go among her friends again and return to work.

When a boy was about five years old he began to accompany the boys who took the goats out to pasture, and in a short time he was regarded as a goat-herd himself. A girl was taught by her mother to dig, to cook, and to perform other household duties. There were no rites of initiation at puberty either for boys or for girls.

### MARRIAGE

Among the Bambwa, clan exogamy was strictly followed and polygamy prevailed. A man was always anxious to have as many wives as he could procure, especially because of the extra food he was thus able to obtain. There was always a great desire to grow more grain than was required for food so that it might be used for beer-making. When visitors came to spend a night with a man, they were not allowed to sleep in his house but an empty hut was placed at their disposal.

Wives were as a rule obtained by exchange, and if a youth had sisters it was an easy matter to obtain wives. He would arrange with his parents to give one of his sisters to some man of another clan, who would arrange with his parents to give one of his sisters in exchange. The girls went to their husbands and took their places as wives without any ceremony or formality. When a man had no sister to exchange, he got the permission of some man and woman to marry their daughter and promised in return a number of goats. The fee might amount to as many as twenty goats, but it was not paid at once, though the girl was given to her husband without delay. If after a reasonable time the husband had not paid the animals promised, his wife was taken from him and given to another man.

### ILLNESS

When the cause of a man's illness had been found by the medicine-man to be a ghost of his own family, the ghost had to be appeased by the offering of a goat, which was killed by

having its throat cut near a shrine built at the spot where the ghost was supposed to have taken up its residence. The blood was allowed to run on the ground by the shrine, and prayers were made to the ghost that in return it would refrain from causing further trouble. The meat was cooked and eaten near the shrine, only relatives of the sick person being permitted to partake.

If, however, the ghost was of a hostile class, different tactics had to be adopted. The medicine-man killed a fowl, allowing the blood to flow over various medicines which he had brought and spread in front of the sick man. He then proceeded to make incisions in the flesh of the sick man's chest, arms, legs, and back and, powdering some of the medicines which had an irritating effect in the palm of his hand, he spat on his thumb, dipped it into the powder and rubbed it into the incisions. A small hut was built near and the patient laid in it, after which it was set on fire. A strong man was deputed to stand near and as soon as the patient was in danger of burning, he was snatched out. By this time the ghost was supposed to have fled from the fire. The medicine-man then took the fowl, pounded the meat and made it into a savoury dish which he offered to the ghost, praying to it not to injure the man again.

When a man was suffering from abdominal troubles, he was given an enema of hot water and was carried outside to defecate, being treated afterwards with other remedies.

### DEATH

When a man died his legs were bent up and his hands were crossed in front of him with the arms straight. This was sometimes done before death and the limbs were tied lest they should be stretched out and become rigid in that position. All ornaments were removed from the dead man. The grave was dug in the hut, the body placed in it on an old sleeping mat in a sitting posture, and the grave filled up with earth. A woman was buried outside, lying on her back with her legs bent up and her hands on either side of her head.

The brother of a dead man took possession of his widows at once, but one widow was left in the hut for a month to guard the grave, and the mourners also remained there for a month, during which they carried out a daily programme of mourning and wailing. At the end of the month, a goat was killed and the head placed on the grave. The mourners ate the meat, washed, shaved their heads and cut their nails. The hair and nail parings of each person were tied in a bundle and fastened to the roof of the hut. They then left the hut, the posts were cut and the hut fell on the grave. This ended the mourning and no further notice was taken of the place, though the ghost was supposed to hover near it.

When one man murdered another, no quarter was shown and no compensation was accepted, but the dead man's relatives hunted down and killed the murderer.

# KATWE IN TORO

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE SALT-WORKS

Hot springs—the salt-works at Kasenya Nakalongo—purifying salt—salt-workers—their village—carrying salt—salt at Katwe

THE salt-works at Katwe have long been known to the inhabitants of the Lake region, and purchasers come from long distances to buy the salt. In the Katwe district and along both sides of the Ruwenzori range there are to be found streams, flowing to the rivers and to the lake, which leave a saline deposit on their banks. Most of these streams rise from springs which are hot, and one of the largest rises on the western side of the Semliki valley, where the spring forms a large pool fully twenty feet wide drained by a stream which meanders into the Semliki river. In all these places the inhabitants know how to extract the impure salt by washing the sand and evaporating the water.

The best salt was not obtained at Katwe proper, but from a small lake, or rather a depression with a pool in the bottom, a few miles to the north of Katwe at a place called Kasenya Nakalongo. I visited this place and saw the work in process. The depression was some three to four hundred yards in diameter, almost circular, and some thirty feet deep. The floor was lined with a dark grey clay or mud, and the pool was foul-smelling and had a dirty-looking scum on it. In the dry season the pool was small and shallow and sometimes dried up entirely and the salt-workers scraped up the deposit left and washed from it the salt. In the clay surrounding the pool the salt-workers dug dozens of shallow pools some ten feet in diameter and cut gutters connecting these with the main pool.





The salt-pans



Huts of salt-workers

## Katwe Salt Works





The water from the main pool was allowed to fill one of these salt-pans, and the inlet was then stopped and the water left to evaporate in the heat of the sun. The crust or scum left behind was scraped up and carried to the village, where it was spread upon the hard ground to dry before being packed up for salt. When I visited the place some of the pools were dry and the scum had been removed, others had just been filled, and on some the scum was rapidly hardening as the water evaporated. When a better salt was wanted, the scum was washed in pots which were perforated in the bottom with fine holes. The washing water was then evaporated, the resulting salt being cleaner and whiter than that got by simply drying the scum, but not so good as that obtained from Kibero on Lake Albert.

The depression was intensely hot and had a foul sulphurous smell. The people there declared that the pool did not rise from a spring but was filled by the rains, and that the saline properties came from the ground; but there is probably a hot spring, as in so many places in this district.

The workers at the salt-works were almost all of the Bakonjo tribe, but were called *Munyampaka*. Their village was about half a mile from the salt pool and there they had their drying grounds and boiling pans and stores. There were huts in which the people who came to buy salt might lodge, and a large shed in which they sat to bargain and where they made up their bundles. Purchasers came from various parts of Ankole and from Toro. The ferry to Ankole did a great trade in conveying buyers, who paid a few cents to cross the river, which was here about half a mile wide. Each day as we journeyed from Ankole we must have passed anything up to one hundred traders, and each man carried at least eighty and some a hundred pounds of salt. On the Toro side we found many of the Bambwa tribe carrying salt to the north. They tied their loads to slings which they put round their foreheads, resting the loads upon their backs according to the method adopted by Nilotic peoples and by the people on Mount Elgon and the Masai tribes.

At Katwe proper the salt was of a coarser kind and was largely used for cattle. No attempt was made to purify it, and it was scraped up, dried, and used without any effort to get rid of the sand and other impurities which were mixed with it. During the rainy season there was so much water that salt could only be obtained by evaporating it.

# THE BAKUNTA

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ORIGIN AND CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE

Descendants of a man of Buganda—clans and totems—agriculture—  
marriage—illness—death—inheritance

THIS small tribe was found on the shores of Lake Edward. The members claimed to be descendants of a man Ndeki, who fled from Buganda with a number of companions. This was in the earlier days in Buganda, when a new king did not put all the princes to death at the beginning of his reign, but left them to live with chiefs who were responsible for their behaviour and welfare. These princes often rose in rebellion against their brother, the reigning king, and endeavoured to wrest the kingdom from him. If the king was killed in the fight, the man who did the deed was handsomely rewarded and raised to a position of authority and importance at the time, but when later any misfortune or illness attacked members of the royal house, the priests would declare that the ghost of the last monarch desired vengeance on his murderer, and the dead king's successor would be persuaded to arrest and kill the man whose act had put him on his throne. If it was the rebellious prince who had been killed, the same treatment would be meted out to his slayer, for none might shed royal blood with impunity.

The chief Ndeki had killed a prince in this way and was forced to flee for his life, because the priests insisted that he was the cause of misfortune in the land. He took with him some companions and they passed through Ankole, settling finally on the shore of Lake Edward. The company consisted of a few men belonging to two or three of the Baganda clans, with a limited number of women, and to build up their

numbers these men formed alliances with the women of various tribes in the district. Their customs naturally became somewhat modified to suit their altered circumstances. Ndeki and his sons were the recognised leaders of the tribe, though various clan elders ruled under them as heads of their own clans. Recently all the sons of the chief, Munyankomi, a descendant of Ndeki, died, but his daughter bore a son, called Petero Kayanhu, who became the leader. They called their country Bunyampuka.

The names of the clans with their totems were:

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1. Mamba,           | totem <i>mamba</i> (lung-fish).                          |
| 2. Mamba Basonga,   | „ <i>mamba</i> (lung-fish) and <i>butiko</i> (a fungus). |
| 3. Bagahyi,         | „ <i>nseri</i> (frog).                                   |
| 4. Bakulungu,       | „ <i>ngobe</i> (monkey).                                 |
| 5. Nsenene Basonga, | „ <i>nsenene</i> (grasshopper).                          |
| 6. Abaitiri,        | „ <i>nte</i> (cow that had been with the bull).          |
| 7. Bayangwe,        | „ <i>nkuni</i> (antelope).                               |
| 8. Abaluwha,        | „ <i>njovu</i> (elephant).                               |

## AGRICULTURE

As in Buganda, the women did the work in the fields and the men built and fought. A man would cut down the grass, shrubs, and trees for his wife, but all the digging was left to the woman. They lived mostly on plantains, but also cultivated millet, both the larger kind called *mutama* and the smaller *bulo*, peas, beans, a little maize, and various kinds of marrows and edible roots.

## MARRIAGE

In marriage ceremonies they followed the customs of Buganda, but combined with them a few of the Banyankole customs. A marriage-fee had to be paid by the man before he could claim his bride, and it amounted to two cows and ten goats. The bride was treated as in Ankole, being fattened and secluded before marriage and carefully guarded, but after marriage she might permit any of her husband's friends to share her bed.

## ILLNESS AND DEATH

Illness was treated as in Buganda, that is, it was attributed to magic or to ghosts and the medicine-man was summoned to discover the cause. If it was a ghost it had to be propitiated, and if it was magic it had to be overcome before ordinary remedies were used.

When a man died, his limbs were straightened, his hands crossed on his breast, and the body was wrapped in bark-cloth or cowskin. He was buried near his house and the mourning continued for four days. The eldest son was always the heir, and inherited the widows as well as the property.



# THE BAKYIGA, PEOPLE OF KIGEZI

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

Position and scenery—the people—hostility of clans—villages—elders of the village—land—language—clans—clothing—food—slaves—seasons—*Nabinge*, god of earthquake—magic and ghosts—amulets—superstitions

-4-11-9  
-4-13-2 **T**HE district of Kigezi occupies the southern part of the Ruwenzori range of mountains, bordering on Lake Edward, stretching south to the Ruanda district and west to the Belgian Congo, and bounded on the east and north by Ankole. The equator lies to the north, but so near that Kigezi may almost be said to be on the equator.)

11 (The climate is an excellent one, and the district with its tropical fertility and its wonderful mountain scenery is certainly the finest in Eastern Africa.) The mountains vary in height from five to thirteen thousand feet, and seem generally to be arranged in horse-shoe-shaped ranges or in circles, so that it is impossible to enter some parts of the country without climbing over a range nine or ten thousand feet high. Enclosed by these ranges are large expanses of country, often dotted with hills of considerable height. These valleys, with their luxuriant growth of trees, shrubs, and flowers, their brightly-coloured birds and insects, their many wild animals, and the splendid waterfalls which here and there dash from the heights of the mountains, make a spectacle hardly to be equalled.)

4-11-3  
4-11-3 Though the Bakyiga were a fairly large tribe, the inhabitants of the district numbering well over a million souls, their land was so large that all the traveller saw of them was a few scattered groups of huts at long intervals. Round these

<sup>1</sup> In some of the valleys there are beautiful lakes of clear, cool water, some of the largest being two miles long and a mile wide. These lakes have forests of splendid timber round them, the foliage of the trees having wonderful colouring. Water lilies in the lake and flowers on the sides add to the enchantment making the scene appear almost too beautiful to be real.



Litter used for carrying chiefs on Kigezi Mountains



villages extended plots of cultivated land where each woman possessed a large field, and where the cows, goats, and sheep were pastured. The members of each village claimed as their own the sides of the hill on which their village was built, and any intrusion by strangers was fiercely resented and often led to strife and bloodshed. (As each man in a village might have several wives and each wife had to have a field of her own, the hills surrounding the villages were well cultivated.)

The people were of the Bantu stock and were mostly agricultural, though a few pastoral clans might be found on the lower slopes of the hills where the large plateaux afforded excellent pasturage. The Bakyiga were a wild race who in the past resisted all attempts to bring them into subjection, and are only now being brought into some sort of order by the British Government. Life was of little value among them, and they murdered friends, relatives and enemies indiscriminately. The men were of average height, the tallest being about five feet ten to six feet, while the women were slightly shorter. Both sexes were strong and well built, and the mountain life made them muscular. The women were deferential to the men, but not servile, and no marked affection was shown between husband and wife or between parents and children.

There was no supreme chief, but the tribe was divided into clans which were ruled by their own elders and lived completely isolated from each other; they were even hostile, for one clan would not associate with members of another and it was unsafe for a man to travel alone beyond the boundaries of his own clan land. When going on a journey two or three men always travelled together, and they went completely armed.

(There might be several villages belonging to one clan, for men might build for themselves a little apart from the first village. If anyone wished to join one of these groups, he had to bring the leader a sheep in order to get permission to build in his village. Such a village was called *Ekilolero*, and the head-man was a *Mukungu*. As the members increased, men were chosen as elders of the village to assist the *Mukungu*, who, however, retained the right of final decision in all

matters. No judgment of a case was valid unless it had been set before these elders of the village, and a man had always the right to refuse to accept any other means of trial. When a man wanted land he applied to the head of the village for it, and an annual rent of a pot of beer was often imposed. Land thus granted was handed down from father to son and anyone who intruded on it or questioned the owner's right to it ran a grave risk of being speared down on the spot.

The language was allied both to Lunyoro and to Lunyankole, so that communication between these places and Kigezi was possible without much difficulty.

I managed to obtain the names of some forty-eight clans, but only in a few cases could I find out their totems, though there was every reason to believe that each clan had one.

## CLANS

1. Basige (totem, *ente ngobe*, a cow with short straight horns. If such a cow was born in a man's own kraal, his people might drink its milk and eat its flesh, but if it was born anywhere else they had to avoid it).
2. Abageyho (totem, *epu*, meaning uncertain, possibly a kind of antelope).
3. Abatimbo.
4. Abawungule.
5. Abahimba.
6. Abahesi.
7. Abahubwa.
8. Abafumbira.
9. Abazigaba.
10. Abalundo.
11. Abalihira.
12. Abawiga.
13. Abayunorulo.
14. Abakongwe.
15. Abasakuru.
16. Abakimbire.
17. Abanyabutumbi.
18. Ababitira (totem, *epu*).
19. Abasaka.
20. Abalitu.
21. Abanyangabu.
22. Abageri.
23. Abagabira.
24. Abazubikhi (totem, *epu*).
25. Abasingola.
26. Abachuchu.
27. Abazingwe.
28. Abainiki.
29. Abasogi.
30. Abatabalwa.
31. Abanyakazu.
32. Abasonde.
33. Abalihi.
34. Abatendula.
35. Abasyiaba.
36. Abakoko.
37. Abakonjo.
38. Abagunga.
39. Abalere.
40. Abanewiru.
41. Abagaru.
42. Abasanza.
43. Ababaizi.
44. Abasuku.
45. Abagala.
46. Abakongola.
47. Abajija.
48. Abanyonyi.



Man of the Bakyiga, Kigezi





Man of the Bakyiga, Kigezi

## CLOTHING, FOOD, AND HOME LIFE

The skins of animals formed the only clothing worn by either sex. Boys and men wore a goat-skin, hanging from the right shoulder by a sling of two legs tied together, and passing under the left arm. Girls until about the age of seven went nude and when they showed signs of maturing they wore a small skin round their loins. Women wore two skins round the loins, one in front and one at the back; and they put their children in slings of sheep-skin on their backs, so that they could carry them with them as they went on with their work.

Goat-skins were valued and bought for clothing. A wealthy man who hired peasants to look after his goats might give them the meat of killed animals as payment, but he used the skins for clothing for himself and his family. An elder of a village might have as many as seventy goats and sheep. Poorer people contented themselves with sheep-skins for clothing. They generally shaved the wool off and, after drying the skin, stamped upon it until it was soft. Sheep-skins were always easily obtained, for sheep were often killed for sacrifices and the taking of auguries.

(Men and women generally ate together unless the meal consisted of goat or sheep mutton, which no woman might eat. In that case a woman and her daughters ate together, apart from the male members of the family. Frogs and tadpoles were caught and eaten by some clans on the shores of the lakes.)

In the house a special place was reserved for the husband, who sat near the fire where he could see out by the doorway. His seat was not the stool cut from a block of wood which was used by most tribes, but it was made like a bed, with four legs and side pieces to which a woven or plaited seat was attached. Women and children sat on the floor near the fire.

(Slaves used to be common, and were bought for a cow or a sheep, but for some time the presence of the white man has prevented the holding of the slave-markets.)

They had no fixed names or divisions of seasons, but

regarded the year as being about six months, divided into the dry and the rainy seasons. The length of these seasons varied in different years.

### RELIGION

4-52-7 (It would hardly be correct to say that there was no religion, for there were many objects of reverence and there was an imperfect idea of a creator, who, however, was not in any sense worshipped.)

4-52-7 (Of recent years much attention has been paid to *Nabinge*, the god of earthquake, but this god was introduced from a southern tribe and was formerly quite unknown. When plague or other illness broke out, it was attributed to *Nabinge*, who must be appeased. The head-man of the village built a shrine and called upon the people to bring offerings of goats and sheep. These were exchanged for a cow or cows according to their number. One cow was killed at the shrine and the blood, which was allowed to run on the ground, with the heart and liver, which were placed in the shrine, were the portion of the god. Some of the meat was cooked and eaten on the spot, and the people carried the rest to their homes.)

4-52-7 (Magic was greatly feared; but the chief objects of reverence and dread were ghosts, to whom offerings were made in any case of trouble or illness. When a man fell ill, a medicine-man was sent for to decide what ghost was causing the trouble and what offerings should be made to pacify it. An augury was taken by the medicine-man and his assistant over some animal, generally a fowl or a sheep, and the medicine-man was then able to announce whether it was necessary to destroy the ghost entirely or whether it should be pacified by some offering. Auguries were also sometimes taken by sprinkling grain and watching how it fell and spread, or over water upon which the powdered leaves of herbs were sprinkled; according to the shapes the powder formed the interpretation was given.)

4-52-7 (Amulets were the chief objects in which men placed their faith, and a man would pay as much as a large sheep for one. They were made from wood or horns of sheep or antelope;

and herbs and other ingredients, which had been blessed by the medicine-man who made them, were put into them. They were worn on the neck, arms, and legs to ward off illness, attack by wild animals, and every other evil to which man is subject.

When a house was burnt down and there happened to be salt in it, people kept away from it and might not even allow the heat of the fire to reach them.

When lightning struck a man, his whole village ceased work until offerings had been made, with prayers that no more might be killed.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE

Agriculture—ownership of land—guarding against attack—preparing a field—millet—the firstfruits—death of the owner of a field—other crops—cattle—birth of calves—milk and milk-pots—goats and sheep—fowls—dogs—bee-keeping—honey—brewing—smiths—carpenters—potters—hunting—warfare—causes of battle—weapons—killing an enemy

#### AGRICULTURE

THE people of Kigezi were diligent workers in their fields; and though they could not start work in the higher parts until about nine or half-past nine, owing to the cold mists of the morning, they worked steadily until about five o'clock in the evening with only a short pause for rest, when they would eat some cooked food, which they had brought with them from their homes, and smoke their pipes. They always carried a few embers with which to start a fire in the field so that they could light their pipes)

(Men and women worked together in the fields, for a husband was expected to help each of his wives in turn to cultivate her plot of ground.) Each woman claimed the produce of her field for herself, but she was expected to do her share with the other wives in supplying her husband with food. What she could spare after her household needs were satisfied she bartered for goats and sheep, which in turn she exchanged

-2-22  
for cows. In this tribe women might possess property and might even pass it on to their children.)

3-66-7  
1-018  
(A man probably inherited some property from his father, and if he had any daughters he used the marriage-fees he obtained for them to swell his wealth.) Each man kept a plot of land for himself in addition to the fields with which he supplied his wives, and they had to assist him in its cultivation. The crops from his field he used for his own purposes, brewing beer or bartering grain for sheep, goats, and cows with which to procure wives. (His wives had to supply him with food, so that the whole of his own crop was set free for other purposes.)

4-45-9  
(The fields were sometimes quite half an hour's walk from the village, for naturally those immediately surrounding the village were soon all occupied. When working in these distant fields, men went in companies of three or four and took with them their weapons, keeping them near so that they might seize them in case of alarm or sudden attack. If an attack was made and the men were killed, the women who were with them were spared, but were taken captive and kept until ransomed by their husbands or clans.)

7-12-7  
(When a man and his wife set to work to prepare new land for sowing, they first cut down the trees, shrubs, and tall grass, which were carried to the lowest boundary of the field, for the fields were in practically all cases on the sides of hills. The rubbish from the field was heaped up and burned, the burned trees and stones and earth forming a barrier against which more earth was washed when the rainy season came, so that by degrees the hill-sides became terraced with the cultivated plots.)

4-14-1  
(The staple food was millet, which was ground into flour between stones and used as a kind of porridge. When going to sow millet, a man made a charm of the leaves or seeds of various shrubs which were prolific in growth, and placed this with his seed that it might impart its qualities to it. There were no ceremonies or fetishes for guarding growing crops, but when harvest had ripened the owner had either to eat



the first-fruits himself or to carry the first head of grain gathered to his father or mother, after which the crop might be used by all.

Should a man who had planted a crop die before harvest, a clan-brother took his place; but before he might begin to reap the grain, the father of the dead man brought a stone and some cow-dung which he laid in one part of the field. The reapers then left the corn uncut for a few feet round this spot. After the rest was reaped, the father came and cut the corn on this plot, which he kept for himself. This ensured the ripening of the millet and made it wholesome for the family to eat.

In addition to millet, beans and, more especially, peas were largely grown, and were valued because it was possible to raise two crops of them to one of millet. This was the only place where I saw the edible pea with blossoms of various colours. Potatoes were also grown and a little maize, which was never ground or pounded but was roasted whole in the ear.

#### ANIMALS

Cows were of importance, not so much for their milk, (C - 5 - 0 6) which was looked upon as a luxury and not a necessity, as because they were the means of obtaining wives and of purchasing other things, for prices were fixed on the standard of the value of a cow. Cows were seldom killed except to celebrate some special occasion such as a wedding, or in the event of an offering made to some ghost. Animals were too valuable to be killed to gratify cravings for meat.)

The cows were smaller than those of Ankole and had short horns, though here and there might be found a few of the long-horned cattle of Ankole. All the cattle belonging to members of the same village were herded together; and when it was necessary to send them for pasturage to any distance, herds from several villages of a clan might be gathered together and the men of the different villages took it in turn to go with them. Should a man be unable through absence or illness to take his turn, his unmarried daughter might take



his place if necessary; but no married woman might herd cows, and no woman was ever allowed to milk. The owner of the cows went out to meet the herds on their return in the evening, and drove his own cows home. Each village had a strong stockade inside which the cattle were gathered for the night. The calves were herded by small boys and girls, and were kept in the houses by night.

When a cow bore a calf, the first milk was boiled with peas and raspberries, and a little flour of the small millet was added. A boy and girl of the same mother ate this, and afterwards the cow's legs were tied as though it was about to be milked and the boy and girl crawled under it. This freed both cow and milk from any further taboo. No notice was taken of the navel cord from the calf, which in other tribes was watched with interest.

When a cow bore twins, the members of the owner's family who were at home drank the milk and used any butter churned, for it might not go out of the village.

When a cow had mated, the owner might not on that day consult any medicine-man or augury. Should he be compelled to do so for any special reason, he might not drink milk from that cow that night.

Milk was not regarded as an essential part of the diet, but it was freely used. Men drank it either warm from the cow or clotted; while women rarely drank it fresh, and preferred butter-milk or clotted milk when possible.

The milk-pots were of wood, and were washed and hung on sticks to dry, but never fumigated as in Ankole. Little milk was churned, for butter was hardly used; but both men and women might churn, though only women might wash the milk-pots.)

Goats and sheep were to be found in large flocks, for all those in a village were sent out to pasture together in the charge of children. Goats were more valued and their skins were prized for clothing, but sheep were more numerous, as they were considered to be hardier. Sheep were used for offerings to the spirits, and the poor people used their skins for

clothing. Both goats and sheep were excellent animals with good coats, and the aim of a woman was to sell the produce of her field for goats and sheep, which she later exchanged for cows. Men also bought goats and sheep with the crops from their own fields.

A few fowls of a small kind were kept, but they were not numerous and were used chiefly for taking auguries.

Dogs of the common yellow colour were plentiful, for every man liked to possess one for hunting. They were as a rule of little use as watch-dogs, though cases have been known when one would protect its master. In the hunt, however, they were very useful in "putting up" the game, and the scarcity of their food made them eager in the chase. Ordinarily they received little food and had to exist on what scraps they could find; but if a dog drove game which was killed, that dog's owner claimed the kill and gave his dog a share of the entrails and some scraps of the meat.

When a dog had puppies, the owner drew blood from a cow, mixed it with milk and gave it to the dog. The owner might not approach his wife until the puppies had opened their eyes.

It was believed that if a woman killed a dog that was about to have puppies, she would lose as many children as the dog would have had puppies in the litter, that is, as many as five or seven, before she would bear a child which would live.

#### BEE-KEEPING

Bees were kept by many men who handled them without fear. A man might have as many as three or four hives placed round about his house. The hives were often merely logs, split in half, hollowed out, and the halves lashed together. Sometimes, however, a hive would be made of plaited papyrus. This was cylindrical, some four feet long and about twelve inches in diameter. In most cases the hive was lodged in the fork of a tree, but sometimes a man would make a stand of logs.

When a man was going to take the honey from a hive, he had to keep apart from his wife for a night. The next day he smoked the bees, driving them to one end of the long hive

before he opened it and removed the honey. Young bees were eaten and were looked upon as a delicacy.

The people ate honey, but a woman who was menstruating had to refrain. The chief use of it, however, was to mix with beer. It was added to pots of beer which were then covered so as to be air-tight, and left for a week. When thoroughly fermented this was the most intoxicating drink the people knew, and its use often led to quarrels and fighting.

### BREWING

Beer was generally brewed from the large millet, which was not so sweet as that called *bulo*. The grain was put into pots, covered with water, and left a few days until it sprouted. It was then thoroughly dried and ground into a coarse meal which was boiled. A little freshly ground millet meal was added and the whole allowed to ferment, when it was ready for use. Honey was sometimes added while it was standing to ferment, and added greatly to the strength of the beer.

When a man was brewing he was careful not to sleep with his wife, though he might hold ordinary converse with her, and he avoided all other women. He was also careful not to cross any water and especially not to carry a water-pot across a river, until the beer was ready for drinking. If he neglected these observances the beer would not ferment and would have no more strength than water.

There was much beer drunk and drunkenness was common. (A man when going to drink with a friend would often take his wife with him, that she might look after him and see him safely home.)

### SMITHS

There were men who had a certain rude knowledge of smithing. They collected their own iron-stone where it lay on the surface of the ground and smelted it, following the Ankole methods, which were rough and inferior to those of Kitara. The chief things made were hatchets, knives, and hoes, but warriors also required arrows, good axes, and one or two spears.

## CARPENTERS

Carpenters were few and much less expert than those of Ankole, and the articles they turned out were not in the least artistic in shape or well finished. People generally made what they required themselves, and there were few or no professional wood-workers. A rough kind of pot and a few stools, some of them cut from solid blocks of wood some ten or twelve inches high, were practically the only things made.

## POTTERS

The art of pottery was also in a very primitive state. The vessels were thick, brittle, and of a clumsy shape. Both men and women did the work. They found white clay in swampy soil, brought it home to their houses, and dried it in the sun. This was then beaten to powder, and mixed with water and a little grit from a broken pot or from pounded stone. There was a little decoration round the necks of water-pots and near the rims of cooking-pots. This consisted of cross-markings made by rubbing the pot with plaited straw, first in one and then in the opposite direction, making criss-cross patterns of lines two or three inches long.

While at work the potter might not spit, for that would weaken the pot. A woman might not make pots while menstruating, for they would crack in drying or when being baked. During the months of July and September no pots were made, for the strong winds which prevailed at these times dried the pots too quickly and cracked them.

Special pots with two mouths were made, originally for some sacred purpose connected with one of their own gods. Recently, however, these pots have been set apart for *Nabinge*, the god of earthquake.

## HUNTING

As a result of the enmity between clans, the possibilities of hunting were limited; but when an animal was known to be in some place where it would be safe to go, a company soon

surrounded it, and it was clubbed or speared to death. Nets were sometimes used and the game driven into them.

Pigs have only recently found their way into these districts and their flesh is not eaten but given to the dogs, while the skins are used for sandals and shields. The skins of domestic animals were used for clothing, while those of antelopes, leopards and wild cats were used for the aprons worn by warriors and for rugs in the houses.

### WARFARE

511 5-1-1 (Though the Bakyiga were a wild and unruly people they were not aggressive, and only once or twice within living memory has there been an occasion when the clans combined to meet and resist some invasion of their country. Such an invasion would come from the Ruanda direction, and, though the clans combined, each clan fought under its own leaders and kept as near as possible to its own part of the country. The clans boast that they have never been overcome by any tribe; but during the expedition places were passed which, though deserted, bore signs of recent occupation. These the people said had been vacated during raids made by the pygmies.)

4-42-6 (Inter-clan wars were fairly common, for clan would rise against clan for some slight cause, the fight would be short and sharp, and the clans would soon return to their normal life. The commonest cause of clan fight was intrusion upon clan land. When a stranger took possession of clan land, there would first be a fiery dispute with the real owner, who would then appeal to his village for help in expelling the invader. The stranger's clan would come to his aid, and the result would be a short battle when one or two might be killed and a few wounded. If the clan who felt themselves injured were worsted, they might patch up a truce which would hold good until they had recovered their strength sufficiently to make another attempt to set the matter right.)

Another cause for clan warfare was murder, for if a member of a clan was murdered by someone of another clan, a common





Bakyiga warriors





occurrence, the murdered man's relatives would strive to rouse the clan to arms to avenge him.

Marriage by capture also sometimes led to fights. A man might lie in ambush and steal away a girl from another clan. When he reached a place of safety he would call to the parents of the girl and inform them of what he had done, saying that they could have the marriage-fee if they sent for it. There was thus no real cause for fighting, but the girl's brothers would sometimes wish for a fight and would refuse to accept the terms.)

Even when working in the fields men had always to have their weapons near, for the opportunity of a man's being occupied and off his guard was often taken to attack him. This was one of the easiest methods of retaliation, and if a man had been murdered his relatives would watch the murderer until they caught him off his guard, and fall upon him before he could defend himself. (A woman was never attacked in a fight, but she might be captured, and her husband had then to ransom her.)

The arms carried by warriors consisted of small wooden shields, a bow with a few iron-tipped arrows, barbed but not poisoned, and two spears. A fight was usually hand-to-hand between individuals, but archers remained in the back-ground and shot at the enemy from a distance.

When a man slew an enemy in fight he took one finger from the dead man to mark the deed. When a man slew his first enemy, the members of his clan gave him a pebble to swallow and guarded him during the first night after the deed. In the morning a medicine-man gave him a purgative and a fetish to wear and he might then return to his wife. The spear or arrow with which he had killed the man was also purified with special medicine to prevent any harm coming to the owner. No rewards were given for bravery, but a man who had killed an enemy was praised and feasted by his clan fellows.

When a man was wounded, he might be looked after by friends; but no one paid much attention to him.

## CHAPTER XXVII

## MARRIAGE, ILLNESS, AND DEATH

Initiation—fornication—arranging a marriage—arrival of the bride—marriage by capture—polygamy—relations between wives—care of the sick—causes of illness—death and burial—armistice during mourning—offerings to ghosts—murder and its punishment—inheritance of property and widows

AMONG the Bakyiga there were no initiation ceremonies before marriage; but a boy at adolescence was instructed by his father or one of the clan-elders in the duties pertaining to married life and also in the clan customs and beliefs. He was also told what clans it was necessary to avoid in the search for a wife because of some special cause of enmity, and where he would be wisest to choose his bride. Girls, too, were instructed by their mothers in the duties of married women, and were given advice as to what kind of men they should accept or refuse as husbands.

Prior to marriage the morality of a girl was strictly guarded by her parents, with whom she generally lived until she married. As there was no communication between clans, if a girl went wrong it was with some man of her own clan and therefore one who was regarded as her brother. She would not, however, be condemned unless she conceived, but in that case she would be driven away from her home and clan and would have to find a home with some other clan. When her child was born she would kill it and strive to find a husband for herself. The harsh treatment meted out to a girl who conceived before marriage was due to the fear of ghosts, for her deed would anger the dead of the clan, who might cause illness among the living if the crime was not thus severely punished.

The rule of clan exogamy and the constant enmity between clans made it impossible for a young couple to know each other before marriage; and a girl's only opportunity of seeing and judging of the man who proposed to marry her, was after the proposal had been made. In some cases she was brought

face to face with the man before anything was arranged, while in other cases she would hear about the man and might dislike what she heard. She was then at liberty to refuse to marry him.) The common custom of capturing a wife made the relationships of married people often doubtful; but as a girl was brought up in the belief that her husband was to be her lord and master and that she had no choice but to submit, she generally settled down to her married life without great difficulty. It was also impossible for a man to learn much about the girl he proposed to marry, for he had no communication with members of her clan, though he might hear something from other women of the girl's clan who had married men of his own. Women at times visited relations who had married into other clans, but this took place very rarely.)

(When a youth wished to marry, the regular and legal procedure was for his father to make arrangements for him. The father got into communication with the parents of the girl by sending one of his wives into their village to arrange a meeting somewhere outside, for it was not safe for him to go there. To this meeting each side brought one or two friends; and they at once settled the amount of the marriage-fee, which varied from three cows to twenty in the case of a rich man, who might also be asked to add a few goats. This was paid at once and the bride sent to her new home without delay, though at times a meeting between the bride and bridegroom might be arranged so that the bride had an opportunity of objecting if she so desired.)

(The bride had to walk to her new home, for, as it was not safe for men of her clan to go there, she could not be carried. She was accompanied by her father's sister and by a younger sister of her own, and was veiled with cow-skins. When her husband met her at the gate of his home, he took her hand and struck it with a stick, saying, "Speak!" At this point, should she object to the man, she simply turned and walked out of the place. There was no discussion, as this made it clear that she would not accept him. If she remained, the stick was

put in the bedroom as the witness of the marriage, and the bride retired there while the friends of the bridegroom danced and feasted outside. A goat was killed to provide meat for the feast, and beer was supplied. During the first night the bride's aunt or sister slept in the bed with the married couple, and next morning this visitor was given a sheep and returned home. The bride then commenced her new life as a married woman.)

(Though the foregoing was the more formal and legal method of marriage, it was also common for a man to obtain a wife by capture. A man sought the aid of a few friends and together they pounced upon some unprotected girl and carried her off. When they had reached a place of safety, the man sent messengers with the cows and sheep for the marriage-fee to some place near the girl's home. The messengers called out to the girl's father, "Your daughter has become the wife of so-and-so. Here are the animals for the marriage-fee. Come and fetch them." Should the father on examining the fee be dissatisfied, he entered into negotiations about the matter, which was usually settled peaceably. At times, however, as was mentioned before, the girl's brothers would be anxious for a fight and would refuse all overtures until they had fought the matter out.)

(There was no limit to the number of wives a man might have except his ability to pay for them. Many men had three wives, while a few had as many as five, and only a poor man contented himself with one.) (Each wife expected to have a house and field of her own and would not live in the same house as another wife. The houses of the wives might be in the same compound and their fields close together; but there was seldom any close friendship between them, and the children of the different wives did not regard each other as brothers and sisters. Should a wife die, leaving young children, it was seldom that another would do anything for them. There were cases when a close bond of friendship existed and one wife would look after the children of another who had died, but such cases were very rare. The care of children usually



Young married woman of Kigezi





Old woman of Kigezi

devolved upon the father or upon older members of the dead woman's family; and cases of young children being left to die after the death of their mother were quite common.

### ILLNESS

Illness received but little attention and nursing seemed to be entirely unknown. If a man was too ill to go about he was left at home to manage for himself, and his wife's care consisted in offering him his usual food at the usual times. If he could not eat it he went without, and his wife left him while she went to work in her field as usual. A mother seldom remained at home to look after a sick child. If it was too big to be carried with her, she placed a little food beside it and went off to her work.

A man who could afford it, however, would send for a medicine-man to divine the cause of the illness and prescribe its cure. The medicine-man used the usual methods of divining, taking his augury either over the entrails of a fowl or other animal, or by sprinkling powdered leaves of the *kirikiti* tree on water, or grain on a mat, and watching the shapes formed by the powder or by the grain.

If the medicine-man decided that the illness was caused by a ghost, an offering was made at a shrine and the patient was then given medicine. If the cause was magic, the medicine-man was expected to make more powerful magic to overcome the first. If there was no improvement, a second medicine-man was sent for to add his strength to that of the first.

### DEATH

When a man or a woman died, the relatives dug the grave in the vicinity of the house and prepared the body for burial by bending up the legs and raising the arms. In the case of a man both hands were brought over the right shoulder and put under the head, and in the case of a woman they were brought over the left shoulder. Any valuable anklets and bracelets were removed; and a reed-mat was wrapped round the body, which was then carried to the grave. The mat was taken

off and the body laid in the grave naked; turf was laid upon it with the grass downwards, and the grave was then filled up with earth and a small mound the length of the grave heaped over it. A fence was built round the grave to keep children and cattle from wandering over it and annoying the ghost, and the mat and a few of the dead person's bracelets were put on the fence. The people who had buried the body washed their hands and feet and poured the water on the grave. The members of the household mourned four days and at the end of this time they shaved their heads to signify that the mourning was ended. A short time after a death, the house in which it took place was pulled down and a new one built, care being taken that the fence enclosing the new house excluded both the site of the old house and the grave.

(Even after a woman was married and thus belonged to another clan, she would, if she heard of the death of her father, her mother, or of a sister or brother by the same mother, attend the funeral. She was permitted to bring her husband with her and he was given a cow, sheep, or goat, according to the wealth of the dead person. When the funeral was over, he was allowed to return unmolested by the members of his wife's clan, who at any other time would kill him if he ventured amongst them.)

Should the ghost of a dead person become troublesome, his family built a small shrine near the grave and made an offering. A goat or a cow might be killed and the blood poured on the ground. A piece of the meat was cut into small portions and placed in the shrine, and the rest was eaten by the family in the house.

### MURDER

The Bakyiga were very hasty tempered and excitable, and a quarrel which among other people would end in words, often led to one man spearing another and perhaps killing him. If the death was instantaneous and the murderer was caught in the act, he was bound hand and foot, placed near the spot where the grave was dug, and tried by the

elders of the village. The usual punishment was that the murderer was placed alive in the grave and buried beneath the body of his victim. Sometimes he was strangled and his body given to his relatives to bury; and there were also occasions when a murderer offered to pay a fine and his offer was accepted. In such a case the amount of the fine was settled by the head-man of the village, and might be three or four cows. The head-man met the relatives of the murderer and those of the murdered man at a place where there was a sacred *kirikiti* tree growing. There they killed a sheep, burning the skin and the entrails and eating the flesh. The head-man then produced a pot of purificatory medicine from which the murderer drank first, then the members of the dead man's family, and afterwards the others who were present as witnesses. The drinking of this signified that the quarrel was at an end, and that there would be no more attempt at vengeance.

Murders committed by members of other clans were common, and led to endless fighting between clans. If the clans did not go to war, the relatives of the murdered man would lie in wait and endeavour to catch either the murderer or a member of his clan, and kill him.

#### INHERITANCE

When a man died, all his property descended to his eldest son. The land which a man had cultivated became the property of his heir, and no one might dig there without the owner's sanction.

A man's heir also took all the childless widows to wife, unless there happened to be amongst them one who had looked after him as a child. In such a case that widow became the wife of some other member of the clan, but did not return to her own home. (If a widow with children did not re-marry, she looked after her children until she was old, when they were expected to care for her.) (If a widow did not wish to become the wife of the heir, she might return to her father if he was willing to repay the marriage-fee which he had received for her.)

Adoption was unknown, and should a man die without an heir, his relatives divided the property.

### RELATIONSHIPS AND COUNTING

<i>Father</i> , tata.	<i>Mother's brother's son</i> , muzala wange.
<i>Mother</i> , mawe, but when speaking of her, nyina.	<i>Mother's brother's daughter</i> , muzala wange.
<i>Husband</i> , musaija.	<i>Mother's sister's son</i> , mwana wa muzala.
<i>Wife</i> , mukazi.	<i>Mother's sister's daughter</i> , mwana wa muzala.
<i>Son</i> , mutabane.	<i>Son's son</i> , muzukulu.
<i>Daughter</i> , muhala.	<i>Son's daughter</i> , muzukulu.
<i>Father's father</i> , muzukulu, swenkulu.	<i>Daughter's son</i> , muzukulu.
<i>Father's mother</i> , nyina nkulu.	<i>Daughter's daughter</i> , muzukulu.
<i>Mother's father</i> , muzukulu, swenkulu.	<i>Brother's son</i> , muzukulu.
<i>Mother's mother</i> , nyina nkulu.	<i>Brother's daughter</i> , muzukulu.
<i>Father's brother</i> , swento.	<i>Sister's son</i> , mwiwha.
<i>Father's sister</i> , swenkazi.	<i>Sister's daughter</i> , mwiwha.
<i>Mother's brother</i> , malumi.	<i>Wife's father</i> , mukwhe.
<i>Mother's sister</i> , nyina ento.	<i>Wife's mother</i> , mukwhe.
<i>Father's brother's wife</i> , muka swento.	<i>Wife's brother</i> , mulamu.
<i>Father's sister's husband</i> , ba swenkazi.	<i>Wife's sister</i> , mulamu.
<i>Mother's brother's wife</i> , muka malumi.	<i>Wife's sister's husband</i> , mulamu.
<i>Mother's sister's husband</i> , iba nyina nto.	<i>Husband's father</i> , tatazala.
<i>Father's brother's son</i> , mukulu we sento or mulumunawe we sento.	<i>Husband's mother</i> , nyinazala.
<i>Father's brother's daughter</i> , munyanya we sento.	<i>Husband's brother</i> , mulamu.
<i>Father's sister's son</i> , muzala wange.	<i>Husband's sister</i> , omulamukazi.
<i>Father's sister's daughter</i> , muzala wange.	<i>Husband's brother's wife</i> , mulamu.
	<i>Son's wife</i> , ishezala.
	<i>Daughter's husband</i> , ishezala.
	<i>Older brother</i> , mukulu.
	<i>Younger brother</i> , mulumunawe.
	<i>Older sister</i> , munyanyaze.
	<i>Younger sister</i> , munyanyaze.

### Counting:

1. *Emu*, with the index-finger extended.
2. *Ibiri*, the two first fingers extended.
3. *Isatu*, the index-finger bent down and the other three extended.
4. *Enna*, the four fingers extended all close together and the thumb bent inwards.
5. *Etano*, fingers extended and thumb laid along index-finger.

6. *Mukaga*, right hand as for five and index-finger of left hand extended.
7. *Musanju*, right hand as for five and two first fingers of left extended.
8. *Munana*, all fingers extended with both thumbs bent in.
9. *Mwenda*, both hands extended with the thumb of right hand laid along the index-finger and left thumb bent inwards.
10. *Ikumi*, both hands extended with thumbs laid along index-fingers.
20. *Amakumi abiri*.
100. *Igana*.

After this they say one or more *igana* up to ten at which they stop as being the highest number.

**Moon phases:**

New moon, *mwezi abonekere*.

Full moon, *kucherana*.

Waning moon, *kwachwera*.



# THE BATUSE OR BALYAN- WANDA OF RUANDA

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE TRIBE AND ITS GOVERNMENT

The clans—government—powers of the chiefs—taxation—murder—  
homicide—death in battle—suicide—the chief priest

THOUGH much of the Ruanda country became Belgian after the war, there is still a large part of Kigezi which is British Ruanda. My information with regard to these people was derived from two chiefs who were political prisoners in Mbarara. One of them was a prince of Ruanda who had fought against the British during the war and had been captured, and both were exiles from their own country because their king regarded them as dangerous to him and wished to kill them.

### THE CLANS

The tribe was divided into clans which were totemic, having both primary and secondary totems. Sub-divisions of several clans were mentioned, but the information given was so imperfect as to be of little value. The names given were the same as some of the main clans and details as to the totems were lacking. The list, however, is given to show the existence of such sub-divisions:

1. Abanyiginya, totem, *mpekhhi* or *epu* and *efuti*, a calf born feet foremost?

This was the royal clan and had three sub-divisions with the same totems:

- (a) Abasindi.
  - (b) Nabaganzo.
  - (c) Abene, which had also a third totem, an unmarried girl with child.
2. Abega, totems, *mpekhhi* and *efuti*.  
Sub-divisions with the same totems:
    - (a) Abakono.
    - (b) Abaha.



Chief of the Batuse, Ruanda



3. Abakono.
4. Abagisere, totem, *enyamanzi*, wagtail.  
Sub-divisions:
  - (a) Abasinga, totems, *enyamanzi*, and *lubombo*, a cow.
  - (b) Abazigaba,                                 "                                 "
  - (c) Abatyaba,                                 "                                 "
5. Abazigaba.
6. Abasinga.
7. Abawungara.

The members of this clan intermarry and also marry people from outside tribes and from the clans Abakongole, Abaswere and Abasinga, but not from other clans, for these four clans were despised people and men of other clans would not marry girls from them.

8. Abatyaba, totem, *enyamanzi*. Abanyiginya and Abega clans refuse to marry girls from this clan.
9. Abasindi, totems, *mpekhi* and *efuti*.
10. Abakongole.
11. Abasambo, totems, *epu* and a house burned down and lightning.  
These came from Ankole.
12. Abaswere.

### GOVERNMENT

The head of the country was the king, whose title was *Omwami* or *Mugabe*, and all important cases had to be brought to his court (*Kamera*) for trial. The king, however, did not appoint the great chiefs or *Abatwala*, for their offices were hereditary and they had been appointed by former kings, who divided the land into some forty districts and put a district chief over each. When, however, a district chief died leaving a son who was too young to manage the estate, the king appointed a guardian, often a brother of the dead chief, who administered the estate until the real chief was old enough. The new chief might then give his guardian a chieftainship under him and retain him as an advisor. If the guardian did not receive or accept such an office, he went to the king, who found him some post.

Each district chief was the magistrate in his own district; but appeal might be made from his jurisdiction to the court of the king, to which the chiefs were summoned by crier, for

the district chiefs formed the council of the king. The court was under the direction of a special man, a kind of steward or *inhebe*.

The district chiefs were also responsible for building and other work for the king and the state; they had to find the necessary workmen and appoint overseers to direct them. Another man of the king acted as a kind of household steward to see that the buildings were kept in repair and properly attended to.

Each district chief appointed chiefs of the second rank or *Ibisonga* in his own district, and they in their turn appointed the chiefs of the third grade or *Abafragizu*. Each district chief also appointed a steward or *inhebe* who acted in his place when he had to be absent from his district. This man always possessed land near his chief so that he might be at hand when he was wanted. His special duty was to take charge of any building for the chief.

#### TAXATION

Every year a district chief had to bring two or three hundred large pots of honey, each holding some two gallons, and a supply of millet, peas, and beans to the king. This was brought to the district chief by the people on his estate, and he took a portion for himself before passing the required amount on to the king.

Twice in the year each person with cattle gave to the king a cow and a calf to supply him with milk and a fat animal to be killed for his meat. Milk was also sent daily to the court for the use of the king and his household.

#### MURDER

It was the duty of the relatives of a murdered man to hunt down and capture the murderer and put him to death; they rarely accepted any other settlement. If a murder was committed before witnesses, they would seize the murderer and hand him over to the relatives of the dead man. If, however, one man abused another before witnesses, the offended man

might put the other to death without fear of punishment, for the witnesses would state the reason for his action and he would not suffer for it.

When a murder was committed secretly and the body was found without any trace of the murderer, it caused much difficulty. The relatives had to inform the chief of anything they knew concerning the relations of the dead man with the people of the district. Any person with whom the dead man had had a quarrel or disagreement was captured, and a priest killed a fowl and took an augury in order to find out whether he was guilty or not. Should the augury be in the suspected man's favour he was released, and some other magical means of finding the murderer were tried.

Sometimes a murderer would confess his deed to the king or chiefs and notify his desire to atone. The family of the murdered man were called to a meeting and the murderer had to supply a sheep. The king was present at the meeting and ordered the animal to be killed and cut open, after which the murderer and the head-man of the murdered man's clan placed their hands on the entrails. Portions of every kind of food used by the people were brought and placed in the sheep with purificatory herbs, and again the two men placed their hands in it. The sheep was then called *Maana* or god and was the pledge of peace. Some clans, however, refused to make peace with a murderer and awaited an opportunity of killing either the criminal or some member of his clan.

When a man killed another accidentally and succeeded in proving that there was no malice or intention about the act, he paid fourteen cows to the family of the dead man, with whom he remained on friendly terms. If a man wounded another he paid him eight cows as compensation.

When a warrior killed a man in battle, the king and chiefs honoured him and gave him presents of land and cattle. Sometimes when the king was specially pleased, he would give a warrior a princess to wife. The warrior had to be purified on his return from the battle, but observed no other taboo.



When a man committed suicide, he was buried as usual; but a medicine-man was summoned to tell by augury whether the house had to be deserted or was still fit to live in.

### RELIGION

I received a statement respecting the religion of the Batuse from Captain Phillips, the District Commissioner. They were, he said, monotheistic and had a chief priest who was initiated into his office by a journey up a certain mountain where there was said to be a flock of sheep sacred to the god. This was a dangerous exploit, but before a man was accepted as priest he had to go there with a sheep, which he offered to the god.

This chief priest kept all the fetishes and carried out all religious observances for the king, who kept neither fetishes nor priests about him. When there was any illness or other trouble, the king sent a bull, a sheep, or a fowl (in the case of war, a bull, a ram, or a cock) to the priest, and an augury was taken from the flow of blood and from the markings on the lungs and intestines.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE KING

The kings of Ruanda—government and taxation by the king—food of the king—wives of the king—heir to the king—death of the king—mourning—burial—accession—the king's mother and her brother

THE list of the kings of Ruanda was given as follows: Kigwa, who came from heaven—his son, Kimanuke, who begat Randa — Merano — Kobo — Gihanga — Kalyaruanda — Ruganza — Kirimu — Kigeri — Mutabazi — Gahima — Ndahiru — Ndole — Muhenzi — Namuhesera — Sekalongoro — Huhi — Kirima — Ndabalasa — Mubamwhe — Gahiridirwa — Lwogera — Lwabugiri — Lutariridwa, who was killed by his brother Musinga, who still reigns.

The king's court was the court of appeal for all his subjects

and his council was composed of the high chiefs. He imposed taxation of honey, millet, peas, beans, cattle, and milk, and the chiefs were responsible for any building or other state work he required.

The king's first meal in the morning was of milk, which he took either fresh or clotted as he preferred. At noon he generally drank beer, but he took no other food until evening, when he had meat with peas, beans, or millet porridge, but he might never eat sweet potatoes. After this meal he drank either beer or milk, which shows that the people were abandoning the strict rules of the milk diet which would have forbidden his drinking milk immediately after eating meat and vegetables. During the night he was roused and offered milk to drink. The favourite wife waited upon him and ate with him, and special boy attendants ate any meat that was left over from his meal.

The king married as many wives as he wished, suitable girls being added to his harem as they were found. The favourite of the moment was treated as the chief wife. These women were continually consulting medicine-men and priests, who told them whether they were going to bear children and took auguries to decide who would be the mother of the future king. The king often chose a prince to succeed him, and when he grew up informed him of his future and made him a partner with him on the throne. The other princes were sent to govern different parts of the country as chiefs.

When the king felt that he was seriously ill, he ended his life by taking poison. When he died the news was circulated over the country. There was no rule against naming the king after his death nor against saying that he was dead. The whole tribe shaved their heads and all men kept apart from women during the two months of mourning. The males of cows, goats, and sheep were also separated from their females for this time, and the udders of cows, after milking, were smeared with ashes instead of with white clay as was usual at other times. One cow was killed when the king died.

A certain district was reserved for the burial of the kings,

and each king had a hill kept for his grave alone. On this a large house was built and the grave was dug inside it; servants were selected to look after the tomb, and cows were dedicated to the dead king. The hill was thereafter looked upon as sacred and no king would walk upon the hill where a predecessor lay buried. Though only one cow was killed for the king at his death, two or three hundred were sacrificed at the end of the mourning.

The king usually stated which son was to reign in his stead and if possible his wishes were respected; but if he had made no appointment, the chiefs chose a prince to be their new king. If in this case any brother prince objected, the two princes went to war until one or the other was killed.

The king's mother and her brother acted as advisors to the king. A special district about four miles from the tombs of the kings was reserved for the burial place of the kings' mothers.

## CHAPTER XXX

### LIFE AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE

Food—serving meat—entertainment of visitors—fire—the cattle—care of the cows—value of cows—birth of calves—goats, sheep, and bees—agriculture—growing millet—drums—dances—adoption—slaves and servants

#### Food

THE Batuse were not so dependent upon milk as were the cow-people of Ankole, but it formed an important part of their diet. When a man rose in the morning, his wives or servants brought butter and anointed him, rubbing it well into the skin. They then gave him as much milk as he could drink and he took no solid food till evening. At noon he might drink beer or milk, after which he usually slept for a time. In the evening, however, he had a meal of meat and plantain or millet porridge, and after it he might drink milk again.

Meat was always cut from the bones before being served, and the bones were given to the servants or to peasants. Men sometimes ate with their families, but almost always they ate alone and in secret, and even the food that was left over from their meal might not be seen, for should there chance to be bones amongst it, the man was laughed at and made fun of by those who saw it. It was the duty of a man's wife to cut up the meat and remove all bones. If a friend paid a visit he might partake of a meal only if he was with his host from the beginning of it; if he arrived during the meal he was not permitted to approach. The rules of hospitality were very strict, and even a poor person of the same clan would be invited to share a man's meal, while the richest member of one of the despised clans would never be allowed to do so. Among the better classes the cooks were men, but among poor people women cooked for their husbands.

There were no special rules about fire; but it was always preferable to obtain it from some other fire, and only if this was impossible would they use fire-sticks to kindle it.

### THE CATTLE

The people were largely agricultural, but cows were looked upon as their wealth and they kept large herds, some running even into thousands; while a man who was considered only moderately rich would have four or five hundred.

The people, because of their agricultural pursuits, had fixed dwellings, but the herdsmen wandered about with the cows for pasture. The cattle were of mixed types, some short-horned and some long-horned; they were divided into herds of two to four hundred, each herd being under the care of a head-man and twelve or more others. They roamed the pasture lands two or three months at a time without returning home, sleeping in grass huts hastily erected, while the cattle were left in the open without fences. The calves were kept in the huts and their presence prevented the cows from straying, while a watch was kept to protect them from wild animals. The men stayed only a few days in each place. The wives of the herdsmen lived

in the villages near their fields; but they had to bring food daily to the place where their husbands were, for even the herdsmen did not live entirely upon milk. Cattle were never kept inside the fences enclosing the dwellings of the king or other owners, but the herdsmen had to bring milk after each milking to the owner of the herd even if the cattle were at some distance.

The men regarded their cows as their own and might sell or exchange them as they thought fit, but the king claimed all the cattle in the country and might take any he wanted from any herd. The value of a cow was twenty goats and of a bull fifteen goats, while a goat was valued at five hoes. A woman who had been captured in war might be restored to her tribe for a payment of three cows for a woman of the better class and six goats for a peasant.

When a cow was thought to be about to calve at an inconvenient time during a journey or while grazing at such a distance that the calf would have to be carried home, the herdsmen tied a little grass round its horns close to the head and this was said to retard the birth. When a cow which had calved did not cast the after-birth, the first milk was placed upon a stool for a time and then poured away. If the cow recovered without parting with the after-birth, the owner might not drink the milk from it but left it to the herdsmen until the cow had another calf and the placenta came away. For fourteen days after a cow calved, the milk was drunk by the herdsmen or by children and not by the owner of the cow. No taboo was attached to the navel cord of calves.

Goats were preferred to sheep, but both were reared in large numbers, not so much for meat as in order to exchange them for cows and other necessary articles. Most men also kept bees, for honey was demanded as a tax by the king and was an article of food among all classes. A large pot of honey with the comb was sold for a goat, and a small pot of refined honey for two hoes.

#### AGRICULTURE

Each wife possessed a plot of land on which she raised crops to supply the family with food. Among the better classes the



wife did not go out to work herself but left it to the servants and slaves. Among the poorer people, however, both husband and wife worked in the field.

They grew millet, both the large kind and the small millet called *bulo*, peas, beans, maize, sweet potatoes and various other roots, and kassava.

For the millet crop the ground was dug over with the common short hoe; and before the seed was sown, a small basket of it was taken to the medicine-man, who gave it his blessing and mixed some medicine with it or placed a fetish in it. Some of this seed was mixed with that which was to be sown, and the basket with the remainder was kept in the field during the sowing and afterwards taken home and kept in a safe place to ensure good crops.

As the grain ripened, guards were placed to scare off birds and wild animals. The firstfruits of the crop had to be eaten by the owner and his wife, and the grain was stored in granaries near the houses. For use the millet was ground and boiled to a stiff porridge which formed the principal food of the people.

### DRUMS AND DANCES

Drums were in common use in the country and were beaten morning and evening. Drums were beaten before the king's house at the noon hour and all the people clapped their hands. It was thought that if these drums did not sound, disorder would prevail and the people would not know what time of day it was. Even when the king was dead these drums were sounded. Special drums were also beaten at new moon, and were the signal for a fresh relay of monthly workers to take up their posts and relieve those on duty about the king.

The chief drums were *Kalinga*, *Kiragutu*, *Kirimugezi*, and *Basibihugo*. *Kalinga* was given to the king on his accession by the people and he accepted it by taking the stick, beating the drum, and then clapping his hands. The people were never again permitted to see this drum. When the skin wore out a new skin was put on over the old, and each month a bull was killed and the blood smeared over the drum.



A chief wore two beads on each side of his head, but he did not possess a drum and only used one when it was necessary to propitiate some ghost which was troubling him. A drum was given to him for this special purpose, and he took it to his kraal, where he beat it for the benefit of the ghost.

When saluting the king, the people knelt and clapped their hands.

There was always dancing at new moon, which was accompanied by singing, by the music of the royal band, and by bells. The musical instruments consisted of drums and the horns of animals through which the musicians blew, while some members of the band had bells on their legs which sounded as they stamped to mark the rhythm.

#### ADOPTION

A man who had no son might adopt the child of some relative without any ceremony, but, as a man might take as many wives as he wished, it was not often that a husband was left without a son. If a boy who had been adopted committed some misdeed for which he was cast off by his new parents, his own parents would not take him back. He had to find means of atoning for his fault and gaining the forgiveness of his adopted parents.

If a man adopted a boy from a clan other than his own, he took him to the fireplace, dropped some millet into the fire and said, "This is my own son and when I am dead he will attend to my needs." A woman naturally did not welcome an adopted son, for he was a standing rebuke to her.

#### SLAVES

There were several classes of slaves:

(1) The conquered aborigines of the land who were really free but were regarded by the upper classes as slaves inasmuch as they did menial work for them.

(2) Household slaves. These were mostly women from among the free people who engaged of their own will in this



Wife of a Prince of the Batuse of Ruanda



kind of service. They could not be sold and might leave service and marry when they wished.

(3) Slaves who had been purchased or captured during wars or raids. These were also women and were seldom sold; when once a slave entered a family she remained there for life. Such slaves were often taken by their owners to wife, and their sons were regarded as legitimate and might inherit property.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### MARRIAGE, ILLNESS, AND DEATH

Forbidden relationships—initiation—arranging marriages—marriage ceremonies—taking home a bride—polygamy—entertainment of visitors—treatment of illness—death—burial—mourning—the heir—the widows

MARRIAGE between the descendants of a brother and sister was forbidden until they reached the fourth generation, that is, the great-grandchildren of a brother and sister might marry.

There were no initiation ceremonies, but before the sons of princes or chiefs were considered to be of marriageable age, they had to prove that they were capable of settling some quarrel or lawsuit between men. The chief instruction given to a youth was how to manage cattle, but he was also taught to cultivate the land.

Infant betrothals were common, and the parents of a boy might agree with those of a baby girl for their children to marry when of a suitable age. The boy's parents gave the others a cow as a pledge of the betrothal, and as long as they kept the cow the engagement was binding. If, however, the parents of the girl discovered any cause for breaking the pledge, they returned the cow with a message that the engagement was at an end. When a boy thus engaged came to a reasonable age, he was told of the arrangement and took presents of beer to his prospective father-in-law. When a boy

grew up without anything being arranged for his marriage, he asked his father's brother to find a wife for him.

When the day of the marriage came, the bridegroom took a cow and, accompanied by some friends, went to the kraal of the bride's parents, timing his visit to arrive at sunset when the cattle returned from pasture. The friends and relatives of the bride received the young man outside the kraal and they drank beer together. Then a sister of the bride came, and conducted the young man, leaving his friends outside, to a hut in the kraal where the bride was sitting. The bridegroom carried with him a runner of wild gourd which he twisted into a wreath and put on the bride's head. A pot of milk was given to him and he drank a mouthful which he puffed over the bride. He and the bride then placed their hands on the stones of the fire-place on which the pots stood while cooking; they churned a little butter together; a pot with water was put on the fire and together they sprinkled in flour, stirred it with one stick, and made porridge. Then the bridegroom returned to his friends outside the kraal gate and there they danced and drank beer all night, for none of them might sleep.

In the morning a mat was spread outside the kraal gate and the bride's father and some friends sat on it with the bridegroom. A cow was given to the friends of the bridegroom when they left to go home, and later in the day, after the bride's friends had discussed matters, the bridegroom also went home to prepare things for his bride's arrival.

The party which conducted the bride to her new home included her father, her brother's wife, her sister, and her young brother. The bride was carried in a litter and veiled, and the party arrived at the bridegroom's kraal when the cows were returning from the pasture. The bride was received by women relatives of the bridegroom, who took her into a house which they had prepared for her.

In the evening the bride joined her husband, but her young brother slept between her husband and herself that night and sometimes for two or three nights and the marriage might not

be consummated until he had gone. The rest of the bride's party left on the second day, after receiving presents.

A son-in-law did not fear his wife's parents, but was regarded and treated by them as a son.

A man might marry as many as five wives, but he brought only one of them to live in his own village; for the others he built houses in their villages and visited them there. If he was wealthy, which was usually the condition of a man who married more than one wife, he gave each of them cows to supply her with milk, a man to herd them, men to dig her field, and also maids to wait upon her and work in her field.

A wife was usually restricted to her husband in sexual intercourse, but when a great friend of the husband paid him a visit he might permit him to live with one of his wives who acted as the visitor's wife for the time. It was, however, more usual for a guest to go to another house with his own wife, or for the host and his wife to sleep on a mat on the floor and leave the bed to the guest and his wife.

### ILLNESS AND DEATH

When a man fell ill, his wife informed his relatives and a medicine-man was summoned to discover by augury whether magic was being used or whether the illness was the work of some ghost. If magic was found to be the cause of the illness, the name of the person using it had also to be discovered by augury, and he was accused and brought before the king or some chief to be tried. Invariably a man who had been discovered by augury to be guilty was condemned without question; he might appeal to the poison ordeal, but he had very little chance of escape, and was always put to death. If the augury showed the illness to be due to a ghost, a bull was offered to the ghost and it was begged to stop troubling the man.

Before a man died he generally named his heir, who was usually one of his sons, though not necessarily so and not always the eldest son. If a man died without having named



his heir, the king or his clan appointed someone to inherit his property.

When a man died, all ornaments and clothing, with the exception of a loin-cloth, were removed, his legs were bent up into the squatting posture, and his head was shaved. A cow was brought to the bedside, a little hair from it was put in the right hand of the dead man and a little milk milked over it. This hand with the hair in it was then placed under the head.

In the case of an ordinary man, the grave was dug by the relatives or servants in the garden near, or, should he have no land, in some secluded spot, and the body was buried there. Should he, however, be a wealthy man, the grave was dug big enough for a bedstead to be placed in it. This was covered with skins, on which the body, wrapped in mats, was laid and covered with skins of wild animals and cows. A second bedstead was placed on top of the first to keep the earth from the body, and the grave was filled up with earth, which was piled into a mound over it. The weapons of a dead man were put on his grave, and in the case of a woman her flour basket was buried with her.

A hut without any doorway was built over the grave and a growing fence planted round it. There was always the fear that someone might disturb the dead by digging up the body for the purpose of working magic, and the heir was therefore responsible for keeping this fence in repair until it had grown big enough to keep off people and cattle, after which no further attention was paid to it. After the burial all the people who took part in it were given hot water to wash their hands before leaving for their own homes.

A cow was brought and killed by the grave after the burial and was cooked and eaten by the mourners. The skin was dressed and worn as mourning by the heir, or by some favourite child of the dead man, for two months, during which time he might not come into the presence of the king. The mourners might neither wash nor shave. They lived together in one house, avoided all other people, and had to be strictly chaste lest they should incur the ghost's displeasure.

After the mourning the heir was purified by an elder of the clan, and he then took the mourning garment and buried it in some secret place. The mourners shaved their heads and hid the hair. A medicine-man decided whether the house of the dead man might still be inhabited or not. If the people were permitted to remain there, they, the place, and the pots had to be purified; but if they had to go they gave the pots and furniture away and left the house to fall down.

The heir was purified again by an elder of the clan and then went to buy a cow, which he took to the king, whom he was not on this occasion allowed to see. The next day he visited the king, taking a present of a young bull, and informed him of the death. This reception constituted his acknowledgment by the king as the dead man's heir, but if he proved unsatisfactory he might later be dismissed from the chieftainship.

The heir took all his father's widows except old women and his own mother. He even took widows with children, and the children regarded him as their father.

When a married man lost his father he lived apart from his wife for two months, and on the death of his mother he avoided his wife for one month.



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The red line indicates the route taken by the expedition. The people Bakyiga - Bakunta on shore of L. Edward - Katwe and L. Salisbury people Bateso - Mt Elgon people Bages













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